

Towards a Poetics of Titles:

The Prehistory

Victoria Louise Gibbons

BA Hons. (Cardiff University), MA (Cardiff University)

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Abstract

This thesis initiates a diachronic reconsideration of the English literary title. Unlike previous critical studies of titling practices, which focus almost exclusively on modern printed works, the thesis turns to the titling practices of manuscripts, addressing the different forms, functions and meanings of premodern titling. The overlapping of theoretical and material concerns in this under-researched area of book history necessitates a new form of multidisciplinary approach which combines critical theories of titology with codicological and bibliographical modes of enquiry.

The introductory chapter contrasts and analyses the different titling practices of contemporary and premodern literary cultures. Chapter two identifies a number of shortcomings in current titological theories and goes on to explore previously overlooked premodern attitudes to titling. The third chapter opens with a consideration of the meanings and uses of the word *title* specific to the premodern era and the possible influences that ancient and early medieval approaches to identifying and defining texts may have had on later medieval titling. Chapter four considers the growth in external and internal forms of vernacular titling practice evident in selected manuscripts of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The fifth chapter moves the discussion into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as witnessed by three important codices from this time: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86; Scotland, National Library, Advocates 19. 2. 1 (Auchinleck); and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Eng. poet. a. 1 (Vernon).

The conclusion affirms that titling practices did have currency in premodernity, though the identification of texts was a practice that exhibits great diversity, and in that feature, as well as in many others, what may appear superficially to be recognisable as titling stands a significant distance apart from modern concepts of the title and involves many other contemporary assumptions, about (para)texts, authors and readers, which are essential to an understanding of what medieval authors and scribes meant when they identified texts.

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I dedicate this research to the memory of my best friend Sarah Chinn, my friend and colleague Alexandra Smith, and my grandmother Elsie Gibbons. Where words otherwise fail me, this should stand instead.

We must rest content with the admission that the knowledge of things is not to be derived from names [...] and no man will like to put himself or the education of his mind in the power of names.

Plato, *Cratylus*, 439b-440c

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1 Titles: Now and Then

1.1 Now: Modern Titles

We think we know what a title is, notably the title of a work. It is placed in a specific position, highly determined and regulated by conventional laws: at the beginning of and at a set distance above the body of the text, but in any case before it. The title is generally chosen by the author or by his or her editorial representatives whose property it is. The title names and guarantees the identity, the unity and the boundaries of the original work which it entitles.

(Jacques Derrida)¹

It is very difficult for us today to forget our preconceptions as to the necessity or appropriateness of using a title in every instance.

(Lloyd Daly)²

In the last forty years, the titles attached to texts, literary or otherwise, have been the subject of a small but sustained amount of critical attention.³ In spite of continuing academic interest, the title is regularly overlooked as an aspect of general reading experiences. Twenty-first century readers perhaps more than at any other time have come to expect and accept, without question, the titles that identify the texts – whether these texts are novels, paintings, museum exhibits, films, songs or other – they read or otherwise encounter. If asked to think about literary titles specifically, it is likely that a list of favourite, memorable, and/or familiar titles will spring readily to mind: *Pride and Prejudice*, *Great Expectations*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Gone with the Wind*, or *The Great Gatsby*. But what exactly is meant or rather what is understood by the noun *title* when used in its exclusively literary context? The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* sets out the recognized definition of *title* in its literary sense as

¹ Jacques Derrida, 'Before the Law', in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 181-220 (p. 188).

² Lloyd W. Daly, 'The Entitulature of Pre-Ciceronian Writings', in *Classical Studies in Honor of William Abbott Oldfather* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1943), pp. 20-38 (p. 30).

³ This introductory chapter expands research completed as part of the MA dissertation in English Literature at Cardiff University and published after: see Victoria Louise Gibbons, 'The Manuscript Titles of *Truth*: Titology and the Medieval Gap', *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 11 (2008), 197-206. Some sections of the discussion are adapted from a recent publication, see Gibbons, 'Reading Premodern Titles: Bridging the Premodern Gap in Modern Titology', *Signs, Symbols & Words: Proceedings of the Cardiff University Reading Conference 2007* (2008), 1-13. Available at: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/chri/researchpapers/pgconference/Papers%201%20-%207/1.Gibbons.html> [accessed 21 October 2009].

‘the name of a book, a poem, or other (written) composition’.⁴ And there is nothing, of course, fundamentally wrong with this explanation: a modern title will, by virtue of its very existence, name the work that it entitles.

Titles do not, however, only name. Those who study the title in its modern context dedicate much time to the question of its functions; Gérard Genette, perhaps the best known of modern titologists, suggests that, as well as identifying a work, the title also fulfils descriptive, connotative and temptation roles.⁵ In this respect, the title is much more than a book’s name but, further still, it is much more than the sum of Genette’s functions. The word *title* also evokes a complex of expectations, assumptions and ideals: titles should be relatively short in length; they should be discrete and autonomous; they should occupy position(s), prior to the text itself (the front cover, the spine, the half title-page, the title-page and the top of the first page, for example); they should relate to and describe the work they entitle; they should offer, as Umberto Eco’s suggests, ‘a key to interpretation’; they should securely identify the work, by not changing from copy to copy and only occasionally from edition to edition; they should derive from the author.⁶ Many, if not all, of these suppositions are borne out by the favourite, memorable, or familiar titles listed above; indeed, a contemporary edition of *Pride and Prejudice* will certainly adhere to these titular conventions (or at least give the impression that it does).⁷

As Jacques Derrida intimates in the epigraph to this section, the literary title has undergone gradual but increasing processes of codification and regulation in relation to the

⁴ See ‘title, n.’, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), XVIII, 155-7 (p. 155).

⁵ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 79–93. Building on the earlier formulations of Claude Duchet, Charles Grivel, and Leo Hoek, Genette offers the clearest and most thorough consideration of the modern literary title’s function to date.

⁶ Umberto Eco, ‘The Title and the Meaning’, in *Reflections on ‘The Name of the Rose’*, trans. William Weaver (London: Secker and Warburg, 1985), pp. 1-8 (p. 2).

⁷ Of course, the modern situation with regards to titles is not always so clear-cut; for instance, titular changes can occur in later editions either as the result of the author, publisher, or sometimes even the reading public. For discussions of modern titular complications, see Genette, *Paratexts*, pp. 68-72.

forms it should take, what it should say and how, and where and who should say it. Since the seventeenth century literary, beginning with legislation of the Star Chamber Decree of 1637, titles and the works they entitle have been governed by official copyright laws (the first of which is generally held to be The Statute of Anne of 1710). The eventual outcome of these early forms of titular regulation is seen in the mandatory legalese that is now found on both sides of modern title-pages and in the unwavering link that now exists between author and title. The legal control of modern authorial titles means that their presence in relation to literary works can serve to confirm that work's identity, legitimacy, authority, and thereby verify its place within the literary canon.⁸ Modern titles, therefore, make a promise to the reader; they form a contract; they reassure him/her because they are always there, even when appearances suggest otherwise.

Regardless of its protestations to the contrary, the modern 'untitled' work is not without a title. The adjective 'untitled' itself operates as a title in that it provides the work with a denotative tag allowing it to be referred to and catalogued like any other titled work. Furthermore, the label 'untitled' gives rise to connotative aspects, in that the refusal to entitle a work is now a titling convention in its own right (albeit one of resistance).⁹ The presence of some designative, descriptive, self-contained grammatical unit at the beginning of a work is required: it is expected. As a consequence, the title is seen to be a conventional, integral and indispensable feature of literary compositions and of the experiences of reading or encountering them.

⁸ The legal links of the early printed title-page are discussed in Eleanor F. Shevlin, "'To Reconcile Book and Title, and Make 'em Kin to One Another': The Evolution of the Title's Contractual Functions", *Book History*, 2 (1999), 42-77.

⁹ For similar views on the titling capacity of 'Untitled', see John Hollander, "'Haddocks' Eyes": A Note on the Theory of Titles', in *Vision and Resonance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 212-26 (p. 213); Hazard Adams, 'Titles, Titling, and Entitlement To', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 46 (1987), 7-21 (p. 13); Petersen, 'Titles, Labels, Names: A House of Mirrors', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 40 (2006), 29-43 (pp. 34-5).

The constant, reliable presence of the title in relation to a literary work inspires the reader's trust. It is now a vital part of the reading process, telling the reader what the work is about, whether it is appealing to them and, ultimately, whether they want to read it, and, if they decide that they do, the title also enables the identification and location of that particular work. But this always-already there quality means that titles are rarely, if ever, questioned; regardless of their necessariness, perhaps even because of it, these titles are not often considered or analyzed in the same detail as are the texts themselves. It is this lack of interrogation that leads many readers to assume, firstly, that titles have always existed in the same forms, performed the same functions, and signified in the same ways as they do today, and, secondly, that the practice of titling, of affixing a name to each and every text, has always taken place. The title, in its modern form, is seen to be a necessary part of all literary compositions: how else can a reader find, refer to, remember or discuss a work if it does not have one? Titles, it would appear, are a practical necessity in the creation, production, transmission and reception of literature. In view of its universal and timeless qualities, there is no reason to look beyond the title in its modern form.

Having said this, the preconceptions, beliefs and standards outlined above together constitute a specifically modern concept of what a title should be, and it is this idea of the title which has come to dictate contemporary titular norms. Indeed, many of the standard ideas about titles are based on the titling practices found in modern, printed, commercial forms of the book.¹⁰ With its predominantly synchronic focus, the critical study of titles, now widely known as titology, has done little to modify these assumptions, seeking as it does to categorize and define the modern title exclusively, rather than to trace and elucidate its developments across history. In many cases, therefore, the discipline of titology, and particularly that of the Genettean variety, has only helped to consolidate the prevalence (both

¹⁰ The possible reasons for this privileging of modern ideas of the title are considered in the following chapter ('Modern Titology and Its Premodern Gap').

academic and more general) of modern concepts of the title.¹¹ Few titologists interrogate the notion of the title itself; indeed, a good number actually reinforce its obfuscation by speaking in vague terms of the ‘power’, ‘force’, and even ‘magic’ that the title possesses.¹² The special, enigmatic quality scholars attribute to the modern title, its mystification within critical fields, has led to its fetishization by academic and general readers alike. For Isaac D’Israeli, writing in the late eighteenth century, the title is ‘a subject of literary curiosity’ and ‘some amusement’, while Gilbert Adair, writing some two hundred years later, admits to a preoccupation with titles: ‘I collect titles [...] I am fascinated by them’.¹³ Outside of academia, the recent flurry of coffee-table books and magazine articles, dedicated to the circumstances, origins and motivations informing modern title choices attest to its wider popularity (and fetishization) as a means of entertainment.¹⁴ The currency and influence of modern concepts and understandings of titling is widespread. Except for the odd acknowledgement of the differences between premodern and modern forms, the universality

¹¹ The next chapter ‘Modern Titology and Its Premodern Gap’ reviews the critical climate surrounding titles in more detail, paying particular attention to the modern discipline of titology and the relevance it has for premodern titling practices. To summarise the area very briefly for the purposes of this introduction, titles came to the critical fore during the 1970s, with studies including: Claude Duchet, ‘La fille abandonnée et la bête humaine: Eléments de titologie romanesque’, *Littérature*, 12 (1973), 49-73; Charles Grivel, *Production de l’intérêt romanesque* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973); Leo H. Hoek, *La Marque du Titre: Dispositifs Sémiotiques d’une Pratique Textuelle* (The Hague: Mouton, 1981). In 1987, Genette produced the most extensive study of titles to date in his seminal work: *Seuils* (Paris: Edition du Seuils, 1987). This essay uses the English translation: *Paratexts* translated by Lewin.

¹² For critics who speak of the ‘power’ of the title, see Hollander, ‘A Note on the Theory of Titles’, p. 213; Colin Symes, ‘You Can’t Judge a Book by Its Cover: The Aesthetics of Titles and Other Epitextual Devices’, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 26 (1992), 17-26 (p. 23); Ibrahim Taha, ‘The Power of the Title: *Why Have You Left the Horse Alone?* by Mahmud Darwish’, *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 3 (2000), 66-83. For the ‘force’ of the title, see Jerrold Levinson, ‘Titles’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 44 (1985), 29-39 (p. 33); Gilbert Adair, *Surfing the Zeitgeist* (London: Faber, 1997), p. 89. For the ‘magic’ of the title, see Kevin Jackson, ‘Titles’, in *Invisible Forms: A Guide to Literary Curiosities* (London: Picador, 1999), pp. 1-17 (p. 11).

¹³ Isaac D’Israeli, ‘Titles of Books’, in *Curiosities of Literature*, ed. Benjamin D’Israeli (London: Warne, 1881), I. 288-93 (p. 288); Adair, *Surfing the Zeitgeist*, p. 88.

¹⁴ Some examples of coffee-table books on the subject of titles include: André Bernard, *Now All We Need Is a Title: Famous Book Titles and How They Got That Way* (London and New York: Norton, 1995); Ian Crofton, *Brewer’s Curious Titles: The Fascinating Stories Behind More Than 1500 Famous Titles* (London: Cassell, 2002); Gary Dexter, *Why Not Catch-21? The Stories Behind the Titles* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2007). Dexter also writes a regular column for the *Sunday Telegraph*; for an example, see Dexter’s discussion of Virginia Woolf’s title *To the Lighthouse* in Dexter, ‘Title Deed: How the Book got its Name’, *Telegraph*, 24 January 2010. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/7053991/Title-Deed-How-the-Book-got-its-Name.html> [accessed 6 February 2010].

of modern concepts of the title, their broad, timeless applicability, remains unquestioned throughout both the criticism and the wider reception of literary productions.¹⁵

This pervasive lack of critical interrogation can be explained, in large part, by the synchronic perspective adopted in the majority of titological studies. Concentrating on specific forms of modern (and, more occasionally, early modern) titling practice, these studies promote the idea of the modern title as a universal, timeless norm. Modern concepts are applied broadly and indiscriminately, with minimal, or, oftentimes, no consideration of their historical development. Early practices are generally ignored by titologists and in the rare study which considers them modern definitions and understandings of the title are usually employed.¹⁶ To date no extended diachronic account of literary titling has been published, and only a few extant titological studies concentrate exclusively on premodern titling practices specifically.¹⁷ A reappraisal of current understandings of literary titling in the light of these two untapped titological research areas is, therefore, long overdue.

Premodern titling practices are characterized by plurality, instability, variety, and, in a good many cases, they do not appear at all. These antecedental forms of titling elude (and potentially refute) current synchronic titological models, based as they are on modern

¹⁵ Daly's statement in the second epigraph above is one such instance. For a similar observation, see John Mulvihill, 'For Public Consumption: The Origin of Titling the Short Poem', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 97 (1998), 190-205 (p. 190).

¹⁶ For the only studies, to my knowledge, that interrogate the modern concept of the title and its use in relation to premodern literary compositions, see Gibbons, 'The Manuscript Titles of *Truth*'; Gibbons, 'Reading Premodern Titles'.

¹⁷ The most extensive diachronic account of titling practices, to date, is provided by Harry Levin who devotes a small part of his essay to the historical developments of the title: see Levin, 'The Title as Literary Genre', *Modern Language Review*, 72 (1977), xxiii-xxxvi. The number of titological articles focussing on premodern titling is comparatively small. A number of articles dealing specifically with Greek and Latin titling practices have been published: see Daly, 'Entitulature'; Revilo P. Oliver, 'The First Medicean MS of Tacitus and the Titulature of Ancient Books', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 82 (1951), 232-61; Amiel D. Vardi, 'Why *Attic Nights*? Or What's in a Name?', *Classical Quarterly*, 43 (1993), 298-301; Tim Whitmarsh, 'The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre', *American Journal of Philology*, 126 (2005), 587-611. Several recent articles concentrate on medieval titling practices specifically: see Mulvihill, 'For Public Consumption'; Richard Sharpe, *Titulus: Identifying Medieval Latin Texts. An Evidence-Based Approach* (Brepols: Turnhout, 2003); Gregory Heyworth, 'Textual Identity and the Problem of Convention: Recovering the Title of Dresden Oc 66', *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation* (2006), 143-51; Susanna Fein, 'The Epistemology of Titles in Editing Whole-Manuscript Anthologies: The Lyric Sequence, in Particular', *Poetica*, 71 (2009), 49-74. For reappraisals of premodern titling practices and modern titological theory in a similar vein to this study, see Gibbons, 'The Manuscript Titles of *Truth*'; Gibbons, 'Reading Premodern Titles'.

practices, concepts and definitions. Detailed critical scrutiny of the *epigrammata*, *sillyboi*, *tituli*, *litterae notabiliores*, offset *incipits/explicits*, miniatures, and other practices of titling in the premodern period should achieve a better, more sympathetic understanding of early titling (and other paratextual) practices as well as of the texts and textualities of the premodern period more generally; furthermore, a better understanding of these earlier titling practices, (para)texts and textualites, in turn, should foster an improved, more informed understanding of their developments in subsequent centuries. A study of the neglected area of premodern practices of titling, therefore, constitutes the first step towards a fuller, and that is more diachronic, form of titology.

1.2 Then: Premodern Titling Practices

Variance is the main characteristic of a work in the medieval vernacular [...] This variance is so widespread and constitutive that, mixing together all the texts among which philology so painstakingly distinguishes, one could say that every manuscript is a revision, a version.

(Bernard Cerquiglini)¹⁸

Readers of premodern texts today, whether academic or general, whether they have some knowledge of the complicated textual situations or not, cannot help but bring many of the expectations and preconceptions that now cluster around the concept of the title to them. Indeed, it is difficult for us to accept that popular works such as Geoffrey Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* and *The Legend of Good Women*, John Lydgate's *Complaint of the Black Knight*, Marie de France's *lais*, or an anonymous piece like *The Owl and the Nightingale*, could be transmitted with multiple, unfixed names. Similarly, it is not easy for us to imagine large numbers of premodern texts, including *Beowulf*, *Poema Morale*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and many short, lyric poems, circulating without any form of name at all.

¹⁸ Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, trans. Betsy Wing (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 37-8.

Even when a composition appears to have been named in its manuscript witnesses, contemporary uncertainties about the *mise-en-page* of premodern (and particularly vernacular) works, coupled with the now prerequisite status of the title, means that titles are frequently found where titles probably never were. A good example here is the title *Le Morte D'Arthur* commonly given to editions of Thomas Malory's romance.¹⁹ This title derives from William Caxton's 1485 print edition and probably results, as P. J. C. Field suggests, from Caxton's misreading of a series of final offset *explicit*s in his base manuscript(s).²⁰ Uncertainty remains, however, as only one manuscript witness, the Winchester Malory (London, British Library, Additional 59678), is extant and its first and final quires, and thus any evidence of identifying *incipits* or *explicit*s, are lost. A modern edition will usually suppress and overwrite such potentially problematic circumstances. The need for a single, secure title, propagated (but not instigated) by modern commercial print culture, writes any inconsistencies out of these (para)textual accounts. Readers are thus conditioned to expect and receive all the literary works they read in such stabilized forms. It is, therefore, almost impossible when reading originally untitled compositions (the Old English poems *The Seafarer* or *Wulf and Eadwacer*, for example) to avoid the implications and influences imparted by their modern editorial titles, especially as these habits are reinforced, as Colin Symes notices, by 'long-engrained habits of reader response, taught at an early age' which 'ha[s] led to the belief that a title always has aesthetic relevance'.²¹ But, while it frequently obscures and misleads our considerations of premodern titling practices, the modern concept of the title can be said to provide a useful point of reference against which earlier forms can be (although they are not often) considered; indeed, the critical currency of the modern

¹⁹ The notable exception here is Eugène Vinaver's edition of Malory's romance. In line with his contention that the Winchester manuscript contains a series of separate but interrelated romances (as opposed to a single, unified romance), Vinaver opts for the title *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*: see Vinaver, ed., *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 2nd edn., 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967).

²⁰ For P. J. C. Field's theory about this title, see Field, ed., *Le Morte Darthur: The Seventh and Eighth Tales* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2008), p. 191.

²¹ Symes, 'The Aesthetics of Titles', p. 22.

concept means that even in a study like this, which focuses specifically on the earlier period of the title's development, such comparisons cannot be avoided.

The indivisibility of modern from premodern is nowhere more evident than in current editions of premodern literary works. Despite the generally more complicated textual situations of premodern works, their presentation in modern editions does not radically differ from what has been set out for modern works in the previous section. Apart from the often more extensive critical apparatus, which is usually consigned to the latter and so less intrusive sections of the book, there is little visible difference between premodern and modern forms. It is primarily in these unified, linear, standardized and complete conditions that contemporary readers initially experience premodern works, mediated as they are through critical editions such as *The Norton 'Beowulf'*, *The Everyman 'Piers Plowman'*, and *The Riverside Chaucer*, or popular editions like *The Penguin Classics* versions of Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*, Virgil's *The Aeneid*, and Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. These editions, while achieving a laudable goal in making a variety of premodern works available and accessible to a wider reading public, tend to suppress and marginalize the complex textual circumstances that surround and typify them.

With respect to titles specifically, modern editions of premodern works usually bear the titles by which they have become best known. These titles, contrary to modern suppositions, do not always originate with the premodern texts themselves. Over the course of the nineteenth century a trend for retitling earlier literary compositions emerges, which appears to have been driven, in the main, by an ever-expanding market and the increasing commercialization of the book trade.²² Secure and indicative identification became a priority as the title became a major advertising tool. In these burgeoning textual conditions titles

²² Other critics who identified a nineteenth-century trend for retitling medieval works include Elaine Treharne, ed., *Old and Middle English: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 156; Rosalind Field, 'Athelston or the Middle English *Nativity of St Edmund*', in *Christianity and Romance in Medieval England*, ed. Rosalind Field, Phillipa Hardman and Michelle Sweeney (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), pp. 139-49 (p. 141).

needed to be representative, appealing, and marketable. Examples of these sorts of retitling abound. All the extant Old English poems, including *Beowulf*, *The Seafarer*, *Judith*, *The Wanderer*, and *Wulf and Eadwacer*, have been titled by editors from the nineteenth century up to the present day. Similarly, ignoring the description/name, *Ancrene Wisse*, provided by the opening *incipit*-heading for it in MS Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 402, contemporary scholars gave this early Middle English religious manual what may have been seen as the more accessible title *Ancrene Riwe*. Many of Chaucer's shorter lyrics, including *Truth*, *Gentillesse*, *Lak of Stedfastnesse* and *Womanly Noblesse*, were retitled in the late nineteenth century, either by the Chaucer Society reprintings, or by Walter Skeat's *Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, and this is in spite of numerous available manuscript-based options. In his selection of the title *Truth*, for example, Frederick Furnivall rejects all seventeen surviving manuscript titles, as well as the titles given to the poem in its six early print appearances. It is possible to see these retitlings as indicative: if retitling was deemed a necessary part of later editorial processes then it might suggest there was something fundamentally deficient or problematic (from a modern editorial perspective) about the original titling practices.

The problem or deficiency that faces modern editors seems to be the *variance*, in Bernard Cerquiglini's terms, or the *mouvance*, in Paul Zumthor's, of premodern textual situations.²³ The conditions for the creation, production, transmission and reception of premodern writings do not support a need for titles in the modern mode: that is, the multiple, variable, unstable and fragmented states of premodern compositions did not regularly produce or require singular, fixed, unifying, author-derived titling practices. Secure textual identification was not a priority nor was it a likely possibility. As some of the examples of premodern titling listed above demonstrate, many literary works circulated in manuscripts

²³ Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*; Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Philip Bennett (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

with multiple, different and changeable titling practices, while a large proportion were transmitted, at least initially, without any form of titling practice at all.

This thesis, notwithstanding the progress of the discussion so far, does not merely seek to contrast the titling practices of premodernity with the modern title. Comparisons between the stability of the one and the fluidity of the other are all too easy to make and achieve little other than temporal/conceptual differences.²⁴ Instead, this thesis interrogates the whys and hows behind titling practices both now and then, and, in so doing, attempts to reformulate current ideas about titling, thereby attaining a more sympathetic, accurate understanding of premodern titling.

A reconsideration of the terminology employed within titological criticism is illustrative here. It is difficult to speak of titles *per se* when discussing premodern literary manuscripts. While various features of the manuscript page arguably possess functions or on occasion take forms, now regarded as exclusively titular, none of them exactly correspond with what is now understood by the term title. Nevertheless, scholars frequently refer to and interpret the *sillyboi*, *tituli*, offset *incipits/explicits* and other types of heading found in manuscript rolls and codices as though they were modern titles. At a distance of many hundreds of years, academics now find it difficult to define exactly and, what is more, distinguish definitively between these now obsolete elements of a manuscript's layout.²⁵ This may indicate something characteristic of the *mise-en-page* of medieval manuscripts – that it

²⁴ Sharpe, *Titulus*, p. 33.

²⁵ This distance has also been noted by Ralph Hanna III, 'Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Production in Late Medieval England', in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 37-68 (p. 37): 'the medieval disinterest not simply in expressing but even in developing any critical terminology like our own estranges us and renders the objects of our study opaque'. Recently, a number of books dedicated to defining codicological terms have been published, including: Andrew Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A Guide to their Organization and Terminology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); Michelle P. Brown, *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms* (London: British Library, 1994); Peter Beal, *A Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology, 1450-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). In a similar way, books or other resources that include manuscript material often provide glossaries; see, for example, *British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*. Available at: <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/glossary.asp> [accessed 21 October 2009]. In keeping with the argument above, the definitions/accounts of specific terms across the sources very rarely match.

is malleable, unstandardized, fluid – but in the current era, recognized for its classifying and compartmentalizing and our need, or penchant, for doing so, their apparent incoherence or rather their incomprehensibility is regarded as problematic.²⁶

It is hardly surprising, then, that the more familiar term title has become the convenient and not altogether unjustified umbrella term under which these separate, but not entirely dissimilar, features are bracketed. *Tituli*, *incipit*-headings and headnotes do not quite constitute titles in the modern sense; they are at once something more than their contemporary counterparts, particularly in terms of the variety and amount of information they can convey, and something seemingly less, in that their conceptions and applications are uncertain, multiple, and diverse.²⁷ The practices of titling found in premodern manuscripts may be better understood as representing an early stage in the development of the literary title. The different forms, functions and meanings of literary titling practices in this initial evolutionary phase are at the centre of this thesis.²⁸

1.3 The Title's Prehistory: Theory and Practice

Theory, properly understood, demands that we test our assumptions against different views and against the evidence, that we explore the presuppositions and implications of the positions we adopt.

(Lee Patterson)²⁹

This thesis represents the first extended diachronic study of literary titling practices. It is also one of the only titological accounts to focus exclusively on the earliest, and hitherto

²⁶ For an in-depth examination of the classifying tendencies of the modern period, the beginning of which is located around the turn of the seventeenth century, see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 136-79.

²⁷ Morton W. Bloomfield also distinguishes between the modern 'standard title' and medieval methods of identifying works, but specifically in the context of the *incipits* of Latin works: Bloomfield, *Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, 1100-1500 AD* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1979), p. 1.

²⁸ The consideration of modern titles and premodern titling practices in the foregoing sections is meant to supply an overview of general attitudes to literary titling. Many of the ideas and issues discussed – the privileging of print, the links between author and title, and the necessity of titles, for example – are picked up and developed continuously over the course of the rest of this thesis.

²⁹ Lee Patterson, 'Chaucer's Pardoner on the Couch: Psyche and Clio in Medieval Literary Studies', *Speculum*, 76 (2001), 638-80 (p. 679).

neglected, phase of the title's history: its prehistory. Indeed, the noun 'prehistory' provides a particularly apt descriptor for this often unacknowledged and generally under-researched area. In its extended use, prehistory can be seen to refer to the 'events or conditions' preceding and leading up to the 'phenomenon' of the modern title; in line with its more literal sense, prehistory can also be seen to allude in this context to the unwritten status of the earliest stages in the development of literary titling.³⁰

Existing titological accounts commonly begin *in medias res* with the title in its familiar modern guise (singular, fixed, authorial, descriptive and so on) as the favoured starting point. According to such considerations, the advent of the modern title is located, and often seen to originate, in various cultural and social factors affecting the production of literature: the invention of the printing press, the increasing commercialization and commodification of the book, the ever-expanding market for these products, the development of better methods for their mass production, and the subsequent and progressive standardization of their forms, for example.³¹ Titles, or so the criticism would have it, did not exist in any significant or recognizable way before these technological advancements (which mostly take place in the early modern period) and it is a good deal simpler for the critic,

³⁰ The study relies on the entry for 'prehistory, n.' in Simpson and Weiner, *OED*, XII. 354.

³¹ The advent of the print is generally heralded as the advent of literary titling, see Helen Gardner, 'The Titles of Donne's Poems', in *Friendship's Garland: Essays Presented to Mario Praz*, ed. Vittorio Gabrieli (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1966), I. 189-207 (p. 190); Alastair Fowler, 'Titles', in *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), pp. 92-8 (p. 95); Wolfgang Karrer, 'Titles and Mottoes as Intertextual Devices', in *Intertextuality*, ed. Heinrich F. Plett (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), pp. 122-34; Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge, MA. And London: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 311-3. Both Roland Barthes and Mulvihill argue against this view in favour of the commercialization/commodification of the book, see Barthes, 'Textual Analysis of Poe's "Valdemar"', trans. Geoff Bennington, in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 133-61 (p.139); Mulvihill, 'For Public Consumption'. Petersen, who speaks primarily of titles in relation to paintings, sees the title as arising out of the growth in demand and technological response to this, see Petersen, 'Titles, Labels, Names', p. 30. Shevlin offers perhaps the most convincing account to date as she presents the modern title, or what she calls the 'contractual' title, as developing out of the combination of these factors over time: see Shevlin, 'The Evolution of the Title's Contractual Functions'. Those titological accounts that begin with, or focus on the period after, the sixteenth century, implicitly make these links; see, for example: Anne Ferry, *The Title to the Poem* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Giancarlo Maiorino, *First Pages: A Poetics of Titles* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

considering the shortage and/or partial condition of the physical evidence prior to these developments, if they did not.

Yet forms of titling practice stretch back to the very first written records, which suggests, against the critical consensus, that earlier technological innovations played facilitative (but not necessarily generative) roles in the title's evolution. The technologies involved in the production of premodern literature, which include the development of writing itself (the technology for recording language), are not created of and for themselves. The gradual development of writing from symbols etched onto stone or into the malleable surface of clay and wax tablets through symbols transcribed in ink onto the sheets of papyrus and parchment rolls and then later into the parchment and paper pages of codices did not happen on a whim. Each new method and structure is a reaction to the changing and growing needs of the creators and receivers of literary texts. Similarly, then, titling practices do not arise from these technologies but in response to the requirements of those who produced and used texts in premodernity. This account of the title's prehistory eschews the technological determinism (and its early modern/modern focus) that has inflected title studies (and other forms of literary study) up until now and, rather than citing the technologies themselves as explanation enough for developments within titling practice, it instead considers the reasons informing these technological (and titular) advancements.

In this respect, the thesis aligns itself with an approach which has gained fresh momentum of late in the burgeoning field of book history. Jessica Brantley describes this particular perspective in a very recent article on the prehistory of the book:

Scholars of book history are eager to excavate the codes that are embedded within the codex – that is, more generally, the systems of thought that are both revealed and created by the physical structures through which ideas are expressed. Their true subject is neither the disembodied poem floating free of its material support nor the

nuts and bolts of quiring and print runs but “the sociology of texts,” in D. F. McKenzie’s memorable phrase.³²

Some of the most influential examples of this mode of enquiry centre on the concept of the author: Alexandra Gillespie’s current book, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*, building on A. J. Minnis’s earlier seminal work *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, embodies this type of approach.³³ Throughout her bibliographical history of Chaucer and Lydgate, Gillespie continuously raises the now familiar question: what is an author?³⁴ It is precisely this kind of poststructuralist questioning set within a materialist framework that this thesis undertakes for the concept of the title.³⁵ It is a study, to paraphrase Lee Patterson in the epigraph to this section, that tests and so reformulates the assumptions, presuppositions and implications of current views and theoretical positions on titles against the evidence: that is, against the material texts themselves.

Given its dual objectives – the elucidation of premodern titling practices and the reformulation of current theories of the title – the thesis has found it necessary to adopt a multidisciplinary methodology. As the first study of its kind, the thesis effectively generates its own framework by combining titological (largely postructuralist) theory with the material study of manuscripts, by melding the essentially conceptual history of ideas with the more

³² Jessica Brantley, ‘The Prehistory of the Book’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 124 (2009), 632-9 (p. 632). The combination of theoretical and material perspectives is not new: see, for example, Thomas Hahn, ‘The Premodern Text and the Postmodern Reader’, *Exemplaria*, 2 (1990), 1-21; Peter L. Allen, ‘A Frame for the Text? History, Literary Theory, Subjectivity, and the Study of Medieval Literature’, *Exemplaria*, 3 (1991), 1-25; Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). The status of this approach within book history and the breadth of its applications therein, however, is.

³³ See Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and Their Books, 1473-1557* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn. (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1988). The conference on ‘Medieval and Early Modern Authorship’ at the University of Geneva this summer bears witness to the continuing popularity of this approach in relation to the concept of the author.

³⁴ The question of what an author is became topical following Foucault’s article entitled ‘What Is an Author?’ which was itself a response to Barthes’ ‘The Death of the Author’: see Foucault, ‘What Is an Author?’, trans. Josué V. Harari, in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, 2nd edn. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 277-80; Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’, trans. Richard Howard, in Finkelstein and McCleery, *Book History*, pp. 281-91.

³⁵ Like Brantley, this thesis detects the similar agendas of poststructural theory and medieval manuscript studies: see Brantley, ‘Prehistory’, pp. 635-6.

tangible history of the book: that is, abstract speculation with more concrete, empirical modes of enquiry. Indeed, the reconciliation of two approaches – theory and materialism – until recently usually considered incompatible and even now still generally practised apart, constitutes a third objective for this research, and the negotiations involved in such a project are the subject of detailed discussion in the following chapters. This study is part of a growing area of book history which, to use Brantley’s words, ‘combines painstaking and meticulous collation of bibliographic information with abstract speculation concerning the nature of textuality to provide a powerful framework for reading.’³⁶ In this way, it advances the idea of “‘practical” theory’ or ‘project-oriented’ theory put forward by Paul Strohm in his *Theory and the Premodern Text*, establishing a more specific, focussed, and consistent interrogative account of premodern practice.³⁷

The critical silence surrounding the title’s prehistory means that the potential bounds of such a study are vast. As a consequence, there are many things that this thesis is not. It is not, for example, an examination of titles and titling practices across all modes; it is, instead, a study that focuses on the titling practices associated with literary compositions specifically, and, more precisely still, on those practices occurring in manuscripts. The continuous production of literature over time provides a large body of evidence in which to consider the diachronic development of titling practices. The choice of literary manuscript texts specifically is motivated by the critical neglect for practices of titling which occur before the period of print.³⁸ Current histories of literary titling tend to limit themselves to the early modern and modern period and so to the medium of print; however, the practice of titling literature has a much longer and richer history extending back to the earliest surviving records of the written word. Although this study occasionally alludes to the titular forms

³⁶ Brantley, ‘Prehistory’, p. 633.

³⁷ Strohm, *Premodern Text*, p. xi.

³⁸ Two studies which give some detailed consideration to the titling practices specific to manuscripts are Mulvihill, ‘For Public Consumption’; Sharpe, *Titulus*. For two extended considerations of manuscript titling in a similar vein to this study, see Gibbons, ‘The Manuscript Titles of *Truth*’; Gibbons, ‘Reading Premodern Titles’.

attributed to paintings, films, musical compositions, or to other artistic or creative works, and those found within printed and digital publications, they are ultimately beyond its scope.

Also outside the parameters of this investigation are the titling conventions of literature in other languages. It has only been possible to consider in detail the titling practices of vernacular English writings and the manuscript collections which contain them.³⁹ Having said this, the third chapter considers previous, antecedent forms of titling from antiquity up until the early Middle Ages and, as a result, this discussion centres on the practices of the Greek and Latin literatures. Furthermore, the innate multilingualism of medieval England, the focal point of the fourth and fifth chapters, problematizes any attempt to examine the English language and its literary productions in complete isolation.⁴⁰ Not only do many manuscripts of English provenance regularly contain works in multiple languages, particularly Latin, French and English, but there is also much evidence of dynamic literary exchange between England and France as well as between oral/vernacular and literate/Latin traditions, as the popularity of translating works at this time suggests. When the titling practices of Greek, Latin, and other vernacular languages are discussed, it is principally in terms of their influence on and relationship with those of the English vernacular. The decision to limit the study in this way is motivated primarily by both the apparently distinct (though not completely disconnected) and comparatively late development of titling practices

³⁹ In its use of the term ‘vernacular’ this thesis aligns itself with the definitions/approaches provided by Fiona Watson and Nicholas Watson’s essay collection on vernacularity: see Somerset and Watson, ed., *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003). In particular, the study adheres to the Meg Worley’s definition: see Worley, ‘Using the *Ormulum* to Redefine Vernacularity’, in Somerset and Watson, *The Vulgar Tongue*, pp. 19-30 (p. 27): ‘[w]e can profit in several ways by shifting the notion of vernacular as a less literate (or perhaps completely oral) language to vernacular as enslaved and necessarily intimate – but not necessarily uneducated – language.’

⁴⁰ Here, the thesis echoes the sentiments of Marilyn Corrie in her essay on London, British Library, Harley 2253 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86: two manuscripts also discussed in chapter five (‘Later Medieval Titling: Into the Fourteenth Century’) of this study. See Corrie, ‘Harley 2253, Digby 86, and the Circulation of Literature in Pre-Chaucerian England’, in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, ed. Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), pp. 427-43 (pp. 435-6).

(and other features of the layout) in English manuscripts as well as by the extreme dearth of research in this particular titological area.⁴¹

In view of these limitations, this thesis does not try to offer a history, or even part of a history, of the title. While its approach is diachronically-informed and its progress is broadly chronological, this account does not attempt to establish a neat, linear development from the earliest titling practices through to the title as it is known today. The partial, contradictory, discontinuous state of the surviving evidence from this period means that such an account is not only unattainable but ultimately unsatisfactory. In order to accommodate this non-linear, sporadic, uncertain prehistory, the thesis maps a matrix that gives space to the multiple, conflicting and broken developments of premodern titling practices. As its own title makes clear, this study takes a step towards what might be called a ‘poetics’ of the title. It does not attempt to establish a history, that is, a formal, acknowledged record of the title’s prehistory; rather it provides one account of its developing forms and, while it tries to set them within a theoretical frame, it does not seek to establish a typology of the title. In this way, the study has little in common with the poetics espoused by those such as Naquib Lahlou who, drawing on the formulations of Genette’s preceding titological model, proposes ‘a basic taxonomy of entitling patterns’.⁴² The certainty and stability required for this type of poetics is entirely lacking in the premodern period.

Indeed, as the allusiveness of its title suggest, the thesis aligns itself with the kind of poetics espoused by Zumthor in his now classic study *Toward a Medieval Poetics (Essai de poétique médiévale)*.⁴³ Poetics, in Zumthor’s view, ‘deals with the overall signifying structure

⁴¹ For titological articles which take Middle English titling as their subject-matter, see Mulvihill, ‘For Public Consumption’; Heyworth, ‘Recovering the Title’; Fein, ‘The Epistemology of Titles’. The scope and approach of these studies differ from those of this thesis. For two studies which share a similar perspective, see Gibbons, ‘The Manuscript Titles of *Truth*’; Gibbons, ‘Reading Premodern Titles’.

⁴² Naquib Lahlou, ‘The Poetics of Titles: Further Discriminations’, *Poetics and Linguistics Association*, 2 (1989), 1-11 (p. 2). Available at: <http://www.pala.ac.uk/resources/op/Paper02.pdf> [accessed 15 November 2009].

⁴³ The title of the thesis alludes to English translation of the original French title Zumthor’s study.

constituted by a realized discourse and attempts to define the appropriate transformation rules'; his poetics, therefore, 'is not an inquiry into essences, but into modes of being and methods.'⁴⁴ The poetics that this thesis pursues is of Zumthor's kind in that it offers one diachronic account of premodern titling practices: the beginnings of a diachronically-informed theory of titling practices in English.

The expansive timeframe of this study merits some additional clarification. Broadly speaking, it is a consideration of titling practices which spans the beginnings of written records through to the final decades of the fourteenth century. Having said this, the vastness of such a scope and the limited space of this study means that the choice of material for consideration is selective and, while illustrative, is not completely representative. Instead this study constitutes an opening out of the area of premodern titling. The term 'premodern' and 'modern' is preferred throughout the study so as to differentiate those forms of titling occurring before the early modern period from the prevailing focus on and concept of the modern title. An underlying aim of this study is to move away from the idea of the English Renaissance as originary. In this, the thesis responds to Roberta Frank's call for medievalists to 'insist' in their research 'that everything, including modernity, did not suddenly begin in the Renaissance.'⁴⁵ It is in view of the coincidence of the rise of print with the early modern period that the thesis has chosen to divide its material according to temporal (premodern/modern) as opposed to medium (pre-print/post-print) divisions. While medium divisions were favoured in the two publications arising from this research in its earlier stages, it has become increasingly apparent as the research has progressed that the development of English titling practices fails to map simply and rigidly onto such divisions. However, the temporal divisions of premodern and modern are not without their own problems, but, in an

⁴⁴ Zumthor, *Medieval Poetics*, p. xxi.

⁴⁵ Roberta Frank, 'On the Field', in *The Past and Future of Medieval Studies*, ed. John Van Engen (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), pp. 204-16 (p. 206).

effort to address these, many of the chapters, sections and sub-sections of the thesis work across the traditional periodizations.

The thesis roughly divides into two halves. While the first half sets up the new multidisciplinary methodology, the second half is taken up with its application. Chapters two ('Modern Titology and Its Premodern Gap') and three ('Early Titling: Meanings, Uses and Practices') set out the theoretical and material backgrounds for the study and, in so doing, set up the methodological approach that is employed throughout the rest of the chapters. The second chapter begins by locating the thesis in relation to recent titological theory and criticism, identifying the gaps, inaccuracies and oversights that become apparent when measured against premodern titling practices. The latter part of the chapter reconsiders the problematic place of theory within premodern studies and, in an effort to move beyond the limits of the modern title, makes a case for the combination of theoretical and material approaches. In its final movements, chapter two starts to initiate this proposed methodology through an exploration of previously overlooked premodern attitudes to literary titling.

Advancing the focus of the preceding discussion, the third chapter opens with an interrogation of the specifically premodern meanings and uses of the word *title*. Avoiding the generalized conception of *title* that prevails in titology, the section starts with a critique of the definitions and etymologies offered in titological criticism and by various types of dictionary and ends with a consideration of the semantic range of *title* in its early textual contexts. The second half of chapter three takes a different route into premodern titling by turning to the practices of titling as they appear in the earliest surviving written records, paying particular attention to their distinctive forms and functions. After broadening out the definition of titling practice, this section follows a broadly chronological structure (as do the succeeding chapters) as it considers the development of literary titling practices spanning ancient Mesopotamia, Greek and Roman antiquity, and early medieval England.

In chapters four ('Medieval Titling: Post-Conquest into the Thirteenth Century') and five ('Later Medieval Titling: Into the Fourteenth Century') the combined dual theoretical and material approach set out and put into practice by the earlier chapters is pursued further. The broad diachronic scope of chapter three narrows in chapter four as the thesis starts to implement its own more practical form of titological theory. Resuming its consideration of titling practices in England, chapter four supplements more general observations on literary titling in the centuries after the Norman Conquest with more detailed examinations of the individual manuscripts that contain them. Chapter four examines the external and internal forms of titling practice found in vernacular texts of the late eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The first part of the chapter outlines the expansion of titling practices which are found on the outside or the boundaries of texts in post-Conquest manuscripts containing English. In the final part of this chapter, the thesis turns to the texts themselves as it maps the development of descriptive and designative methods of differentiation and/or identification in the prologues and epilogues of a selection of early English and French writings, specifically the *Ormulum*, the Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes and the *lais* of Marie de France. It is in this growing range of paratextual and textual titling practices that the chapter locates the emergence of specifically vernacular range of *mise-en-pages* and textual identities.

Chapter five maps the development of these burgeoning vernacular textualities into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Continuing the previous chapter's arrangement of synchronic considerations within an overriding diachronic frame, the focus of the thesis narrows once again in this concluding chapter. After examining the development of internal and external titling practices in some early to mid-thirteenth century manuscripts containing English and French, this chapter focuses on three important manuscripts of English provenance circulating during the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These manuscripts are Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86, from the latter decades of the thirteenth century, and

the Auchinleck (Scotland, National Library, Advocates' 19. 2. 1) and Vernon (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Eng. poet. a. 1) manuscripts, both from the fourteenth century. As the three case studies make abundantly clear, the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are a time in which the number and variety of titling practices in English manuscripts expands considerably. That this expansion takes place in advance of the early modern period, before the advent of print and the other innovations usually attributed to it (increasing commercialism, market growth, standardization of format), indicates the importance and the vitality of this early period of titular development. Indeed, the observations and speculations presented throughout this thesis, viewed collectively, make a strong case for a theory of the title, a titological model, which takes account of the title's prehistory.

Finally, the thesis acknowledges its own limitations. The task it has undertaken is a vast one. It represents only the initial, exploratory step towards bridging the premodern gap and addressing the diachronic deficiencies in modern titological theory. The speculative nature of its enquiry means that it produces far more questions than it does firm answers. There is much research still to be done and, in this respect, it should be viewed as preliminary, partial and provisional. It is intended as the first part of a much longer diachronic titological venture.

2 Modern Titology and Its Premodern Gap

Existing theories of the title are lacking. The widespread disregard for history, both in terms of its methodological perspective and its material focus, evident within current titological models has allowed the modern title, which is as much to say the printed title, to gain the status of a timeless, stable, universal norm. But, as the previous introductory chapter shows, any broader application of these modern concepts is likely to be deeply problematic. The first section of this chapter opens the process of addressing the premodern gap in modern titology by interrogating the assumptions, focus, and conclusions propagated unquestioningly by contemporary titologists. Two questions are asked: firstly, what is a title? And, secondly, what is titology? In its final section, chapter two begins the task, which is taken up in the succeeding chapters, of bridging that gap. Initiating a new historically-informed and historically-focused methodological approach, this chapter looks at early attitudes to titling, considering how this evidence impacts on the widespread privileging of modern titles, current understandings of titling, and the efficacy of titology in its present synchronic form.

2.1 Modern Theories of the Title

We must not write to the utter neglect of our title; and a fair author should have the literary piety of ever-having “the fear of his title-page before his eyes.”

(Isaac D’Israeli)¹

2.1.1 A New Discipline?

Titology is generally regarded as a recent movement in literary criticism. The two studies usually cited as seminal in the field – Harry Levin’s article, ‘The Title as a Literary Genre’,

¹ Isaac D’Israeli, ‘Titles of Books’, in *Curiosities of Literature*, ed. Benjamin D’Israeli (London: Warne, 1881), I. 288-93 (p. 290).

of 1977 and Gérard Genette's chapter-length study, 'Titles', published ten years later in *Seuils* – were both published in the last quarter of the twentieth century, and in the decades since there has been a noticeable increase in the amount and variety of publications in this area.² Titles, however, and specifically the titles of literary texts, have been the subject of critical attention, of different kinds and degrees, for much longer than just the last thirty years.³ An essay devoted entirely to the 'Titles of Books', for example, appears in the first volume of Isaac D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature*, a 'diversified miscellany of literary, artistic, and political history' of the 1790s.⁴ It is with D'Israeli's quasi-titological consideration that this thesis begins its own interrogation of literary titling practices. Admittedly, D'Israeli's is neither the earliest nor is it the fullest account available; nonetheless, it does constitute one of the first dedicated critiques of the title in the English language, and so offers an alternative point of departure for this discussion.

Even though D'Israeli's essay is extremely brief and written over a century and a half before the defining studies of Levin and Genette, several of the underlying principles of modern titology are immediately discernible within it. From the very start of D'Israeli's essay it is clear that the titles of which he speaks are distinctively modern in conception. Of this particular 'literary curiosity' he asserts: 'were it inquired of an ingenious writer what page of his work had occasioned him most perplexity, he would often point to the *title-page*.'⁵ In this opening sentence alone a number of the assumptions and expectations that have come to characterize not just the theory of titles, but also, as the previous chapter argues, reading

² There have been over thirty titological publications since Levin's article of 1977; prior to this, from D'Israeli up until Levin, publications in the area were approximately half this number. This study has only been able to consider titological studies published in the English language; in some instances, however, it does reference those of the French language studies which have had direct influence on the development of titology in English. For a full bibliography of titology as it is rendered in a number of languages, see Wolfgang Karrer, 'Titles and Mottoes as Intertextual Devices', in *Intertextuality*, ed. Heinrich F. Plett (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), pp. 122-34 (pp. 133-4).

³ Harry Levin, 'The Title as Literary Genre', *Modern Language Review*, 72 (1977), xxiii-xxxvi. The thesis references the English translation of *Seuils*; for the chapter on titles, see Gérard Genette, 'Titles', in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 55-103.

⁴ D'Israeli, 'Advertisement', *Curiosities*, p. xxxix.

⁵ D'Israeli, 'Titles', p. 288.

experiences more generally, are apparent. He sees the title as originating with and so always being tied to an author and the confusion and anxiety that he thinks a title, as an essential part of the title-page, should inspire in the ‘ingenious writer’ suggests that he also believes its choice should be a carefully considered one. In this one, short statement D’Israeli gives voice to the now widespread idea that titles are, and indeed must be, ‘descriptive’ of and, therefore, ‘appropriate’ to the works they name.⁶

As in later forms of titology, and particularly the model established by Genette, there is an implicit privileging of the title as it appears in print in D’Israeli’s account. The title, in his eyes, *is* the title-page.⁷ That he equates the two is also evident in the quotation that heads and supplies the epigraph to this section. While D’Israeli asserts that a writer ‘must not write to the utter neglect of [his] title’, it is the material form of the title-page, and his ‘fear’ of it, that should be constantly ‘before his eyes’.⁸

Also embedded in D’Israeli’s comments is the notion that the title is always first. He posits the selection of the title as the first stage in the writing process, as ‘we must not write to the utter neglect of our title’, and, in his opinion, its import is such that the writer should bear it in mind, have it ‘before his eyes’, throughout.⁹ Titles, therefore, are seen to precede texts temporally, but, given that titles and title-pages are treated as equivalent and that the title-page customarily occupies a frontal position in books, this precedence is evident spatially as well. The title emerges from D’Israeli’s account, as it so frequently does in later titological studies, as an intrinsic, inseparable part of a literary work. Beginning this chapter

⁶ D’Israeli, ‘Titles’, p. 288.

⁷ The title-page is often seen to be a product of the printing press, and the conflation of title with title-page is now customary, see Peter Beal, *A Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology, 1450-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 418. However, as Margaret M. Smith makes clear in her book-length study, this particular design feature has its roots in manuscript practices: see Smith, *The Title-Page, Its Early Development, 1460-1510* (London: British Library, 2000). For related overviews, see Eleanor F. Shevlin, “‘To Reconcile Book and Title, and Make ’em Kin to One Another’”: The Evolution of the Title’s Contractual Functions’, *Book History*, 2 (1999), 42-77; Ceri Sullivan, ‘Disposable Elements? Indications of Genre in Early Modern Titles’, *Modern Language Review*, 102 (2007), 641-53.

⁸ D’Israeli, ‘Titles’, p. 290.

⁹ D’Israeli, ‘Titles’, p. 290.

with D'Israeli's late eighteenth-century titological remarks, as opposed to those of Genette or Levin from the twentieth, allows the discussion to open out in two directions. Not only do his comments suggest that the application and, what is more, the valorization of modern concepts of the title persists across this history, but they also show that the critical study of titles has a history of its own which deserves, and will likely reward, thorough consideration. It is this doubled line of argument that is pursued in the following pages.

Titology might be the new academic name for the critical study of titles, but it is by no means a new discipline.¹⁰ Its maxims do not suddenly arise out of nor are they exclusively confined to the intellectual endeavours of late twentieth-century scholars; in short, the study of titles is not, as Steven G. Kellman would have it, 'a relatively recent phenomenon'.¹¹ Quite appositely then, the critical treatment of titology can be said to reflect, in terms of the areas it recognizes and the information it valorizes, its own handling of the title; indeed, the early developmental stages of both the discipline and its subject-matter are regularly and often unthinkingly disregarded. But it is possible and, as this thesis contends, in many ways more constructive to view modern titology as a later, and evidently ongoing, stage in a critical study of titles that spans centuries rather than decades. By placing modern titology in the context of its wider critical history it becomes apparent that what the majority of later titological discussions, from the eighteenth century to the present day, have in common is a tacit, unquestioning acceptance of the title as a necessary, integral, and even natural

¹⁰ The term 'titology' is a translation of the French *titologie*, and was first used to denote the critical study of titles by Claude Duchet, 'La fille abandonnée et la bête humaine: Eléments de titologie romanesque', *Littérature*, 12 (1973), 49-73. The term passes into criticism in English with Levin, 'The Title as Literary Genre'.

¹¹ Steven G. Kellman, 'Dropping Names: The Poetics of Titles', *Criticism*, 17 (1975), 152-67 (p. 156). John Hollander shares this opinion, see Hollander, "'Haddock's' Eyes": A Note on the Theory of Titles', in *Vision and Resonance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 212-26 (p. 220).

(para)textual component.¹² So, while the perpetuation and prevalence of this view of the title within titology, and its circulation beyond the field too, can be attributed in large part to the typologies pursued by Levin, and in particular Genette, its genesis appears to lie elsewhere, a where that the thesis, and this chapter specifically, begins to locate and elucidate.

2.1.2 The Genette Effect

Even though earlier (and some much earlier than have yet been considered) critical treatments exist, it has become standard practice, particularly over the last ten years or so, to begin titological studies with, and structure them according to, Genette's theory of the title as set out in *Seuils*.¹³ Genette is not, of course, the only scholar to have theorized titles, but he is alone in having subjected them to such rigorous and systematic analysis, and, while *Seuils* is no longer the most recent study, his chapter 'Les Titres' continues to define the field.¹⁴ This is due in large part to the highly taxonomical quality of his criticism, which can be identified very loosely as a form of structuralist poetics. Indeed, Genette's theoretical affiliations are notoriously hard to pin down, as Richard Macksey points out in his 'Foreword' to the English translation:

¹² There are a few exceptions. Studies which explicitly identify (but rarely move beyond) the modern concept of the title include: Lloyd W. Daly, 'The Entitulation of Pre-Ciceronian Writings', in *Classical Studies in Honor of William Abbott Oldfather* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1943), pp. 20-38; Jacques Derrida, 'Title (To Be Specified)', *SubStance*, 10 (1981), 5-22; Shevlin, 'The Evolution of the Title's Contractual Functions'; Victoria Gibbons, 'The Manuscript Titles of *Truth*: Titology and the Medieval Gap', *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 11 (2008), 197-206; Gibbons, 'Reading Premodern Titles: Bridging the Premodern Gap in Modern Titology', *Signs, Symbols & Words: Proceedings of the Cardiff University Reading Conference 2007* (2008). Available at: [http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/chri/researchpapers/pgconference/Papers %201%20-%207/1.Gibbons.html](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/chri/researchpapers/pgconference/Papers%201%20-%207/1.Gibbons.html) [accessed 21 October 2009]. Note that the majority of these studies have been published in the last ten years.

¹³ Over half the titological studies that have been published since Genette draw on his theories overtly. A selection of these include: Naquib Lahlou, 'The Poetics of Titles: Further Discriminations', *The Poetics and Linguistics Association*, 2 (1989), 1-11. Available at: <http://www.pala.ac.uk/resources/op/Paper02.pdf> [accessed 15 November 2009]; Karrer, 'Titles and Mottoes'; Ulrich Schneider, 'Titles in *Dubliners*', in *ReJoycing: New Readings of 'Dubliners'*, ed. Rosa M. Bollettieri Bosinelli and Harold F. Mosher, Jr. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), pp. 196-205; Sullivan, 'Indications of Genre in Early Modern Titles'.

¹⁴ Genette's theories on the title were first set out in a lecture at the University of Chicago in 1986. The English transcript of this lecture was published two years later, see Genette, 'The Structure and Functions of the Title in Literature', trans. Bernard Crampé, *Critical Inquiry*, 14 (1988), 692-720. A modified version of this paper appeared the year before this as a chapter in Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Editions du Seuils, 1987), pp. 54-97. A decade later, the English translation of *Seuils*, with its polished chapter on titles, was published: see Genette, *Paratexts*.

he has at various times been called many names – structuralist (both “high” and “low”), narratologist, historian of discursivity, rhetorician, semiotician of style, postmodern poetician, mimologist, transtextualist.¹⁵

In Genette’s own words, his is ‘an endlessly forming and reforming poetics’, an ‘open structuralism’ (now identified as poststructuralism), in which, rather than attempt to establish a fixed account of literary elements, he concentrates on ‘all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts’.¹⁶ In this way, he is not solely concerned with naming, defining and distinguishing the relationships; he also attends to the borders, the spaces between, and the overlaps, which a thorough investigation of these relationships exposes. In *Seuils*, as in his similarly engaged preceding works, *Introduction à l’architexte* and *Palimpsestes*, Genette offers a functional variety of structuralism located somewhere between the ahistorical categorizing of structuralism and the radical instability and openness of poststructuralism. It is within this wider discourse of ‘transtextuality’, as Genette christens his new, open form of poetics, that the sub-discipline of titology is systematized.¹⁷

Given Genette’s status as an or rather *the* authority on literary titles and the influence his theories have had and continue to have on advances in the field, detailed consideration of his theories and their effects are difficult to avoid. He theorizes the title through a descending series of distinctions, categorizing it, successively, as an element of the wider categories of the transtext, the paratext, and the peritext. Briefly, at the beginning of *Palimpsestes* the second volume in his transtextual trilogy, Genette elaborates his idea of transtextuality or ‘textual transcendence’ by dividing it up into five separate but interlinked relations: the intertextual, the metatextual, the hypertextual, the architextual and, most importantly for this

¹⁵ Richard Macksey, ‘Foreword’, in *Paratexts*, pp. xi-xxii (p. xiii).

¹⁶ This study references the English translation of *Palimpsestes: Genette, Palimpsestes: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1997), p. 84. For more detailed accounts of the development of Genette’s transtextual project, see Macksey, ‘Foreword’, pp. xii-xviii; Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 95-115.

¹⁷ This study references the English translation of *Introduction à l’architexte: Genette, The Architext: An Introduction*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press, 1982), p. 81.

discussion, the paratextual.¹⁸ The term ‘paratext’, in Genette’s model, describes those elements that lie on the ‘threshold’ of the text.¹⁹ This ‘fringe’ is composed of two further categories: the peritext, which consists of proximate features including titles, prefaces and notes, and the epitext, which includes more distanced elements such as interviews, reviews and correspondence.²⁰ It is these classifications which provide the scaffolding to Genette’s theory of the title.

Titologists since Genette commonly frame their discussions in relation to the paratext specifically. Certainly it is one of Genette’s more useful terms in that it gives a name to, and in that sense serves to pin down, the slippery liminal spaces of texts. In view of this preference, and because it has some relevance to discussions at later points in the thesis, the term warrants some brief explanation here. Genette’s idea of the paratext stems from his observation that a text is ‘rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as an author’s name, a title, a preface, illustrations’.²¹ According to Genette:

we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text, in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of the verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text’s presence in the world’.²²

Paratexts transform texts into books, enabling them to be received and read as such. In line with J. Hillis Miller’s explication of the prefix ‘para’, which Genette himself draws on, paratextual elements do not only occupy a transitional position that straddles both sides of the boundary between within and without, they *are* that boundary; they are, as Miller puts it, the

¹⁸ Genette, *Palimpsests*, p. 84. For Genette’s own description of these five transtextual relations, see pp. 8-12; for a brief, but clear, additional summary, see Macksey, ‘Foreword’, pp. xviii-xix.

¹⁹ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2. Indeed, the original French title of this volume, *Seuils*, is usually translated into English as ‘thresholds’.

²⁰ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2. For Genette’s elucidation of the paratext, see Genette, *Paratexts*, pp. 1-15. For his explanation of the peritext and epitext, specifically, see Genette, *Paratexts*, pp. 4-5.

²¹ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 1.

²² Genette, *Paratexts*, p.1.

‘permeable membrane connecting inside and outside’.²³ The title, as one of these paratextual elements, is both of and not of, is at once inside and outside, the text, and so simultaneously frames and constitutes it.

While Genette’s chapter-length study builds on the earlier formulations of Claude Duchet, Charles Grivel, and Leo Hoek, it stands apart from them in that it attempts to clarify and consolidate the discipline, particularly in terms of its parameters and terminology.²⁴ As the preceding discussion reveals, this is achieved through a sometimes overwhelming number of divisions, sub-divisions, sub-sub-divisions, and so on. Indeed, Genette extends his classifications even further, spending some time distinguishing the different types of titling which culminates in his detailed enumeration of the literary title’s four main functions: identification, description (which is further divided into ‘thematic’, ‘rhematic’, ‘mixed’ and ‘ambiguous’ types), connotation, and temptation.²⁵ It is through these categories, Genette suggests, that a typology of the title can begin to take shape.²⁶

What tends to materialize from this kind of typology, however, is the title in its modern printed form. In spite of their value in titological debates, providing academics with appropriate terms, definitions and categories to use in their discussions, Genette’s theories apply specifically to printed – and therefore more fixed, standardized and commercialized – forms of literary production and specifically those of the modern era. As a consequence, any application of the concepts, principles, and structures which inform and comprise Genette’s

²³ J. Hillis Miller, ‘The Critic as Host’, in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom *et al.* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 177-207 (p. 179). For Genette’s reference to Miller, see Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 1.

²⁴ These studies were undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s: see Duchet, ‘Eléments de titrologie romanesque’; Charles Grivel, *Production de l’intérêt romanesque* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973); Leo H. Hoek, *La Marque du Titre: Dispositifs Sémiotiques d’une Pratique Textuelle* (The Hague: Mouton, 1981). Genette draws on these critics in particular throughout his consideration of titles: see Genette, *Paratexts*, pp. 55-103.

²⁵ For further elaboration, see Genette, *Paratexts*, pp. 79–93. Genette’s consideration of titular functions is derived directly from those of Duchet, Grivel, Hoek.

²⁶ This typological route has become increasingly popular following Genette’s essay; for examples, see Lahlou, ‘The Poetics of Titles’; Tim Whitmarsh, ‘The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre’, *American Journal of Philology*, 126 (2005), 587-611; Maiorino, *First Pages*.

titology beyond these bounds, and particularly to those practices of titling that predate (and postdate) print, is likely to be deeply problematic.

2.1.3 The Persistence of the Modern Title

The special attention that Genette accords to the print medium in his study of titles is replicated across the field of titology. Numerous titologists, from D'Israeli in the late eighteenth century to Giancarlo Maiorino in the early twenty-first, have chosen to restrict their enquiries to printed texts suggesting that such privileging is endemic within the discipline. There are a number of possible reasons for this widespread focus. According to Mary and Richard Rouse, it is widely held that 'the concepts of "author" and "title" could not exist without the printing press', in which case a titological account need only begin, at the very earliest, in the last decades of the fifteenth century, though they generally begin a century or so later than this.²⁷ The title's origins, therefore, can be explained logically and somewhat conveniently by the advances in thought, technology, trade and industry associated with the so-called 'Renaissance'. This (re)writing of the title's history, which relocates its origins in the early modern period and so appropriates it as one of that epoch's many innovations, means that titologists have been able to limit the ambit of their discussions to a time whose titling practices seem far less remote than do the *sillyboi*, *tituli*, *epigrammata*, and the offest *incipits* and *explicitis* of premodernity.²⁸ The premodern alterity of the title is thus distanced, reduced and obscured, a situation which then permits and excuses the application and promotion of modern ideas of the title within the discipline.

²⁷ Mary A. Rouse and Richard H. Rouse, *Authentic Witnesses: Approaches to Medieval Texts and Manuscripts* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), p. 469.

²⁸ The elision of the premodern period is not confined to titology. Other critics who have noticed this tendency, but in other contexts, include: Thomas Hahn, 'The Premodern Text and the Postmodern Reader', *Exemplaria*, 2 (1990), 1-21 (pp. 4-6); Bruce Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), p. 13.

It is, of course, easier to exclude the unknown (and what, in the case of premodern titling, has the potential to remain unknowable) from a narrative, whatever its subject might be. Histories do not provide readers with a transparent, neutral, objective window onto the real past. Narratives of the past are always constructed; they are, to quote Roland Barthes writing in the late 1960s, ‘a form of ideological elaboration, or to put it more precisely, an *imaginary* elaboration’.²⁹ Any historical account, therefore, is subject to reconstruction, and this thesis acknowledges itself as part, albeit it a small one, of the continuous process of (re)writing history. In an essay defending the place of medieval studies within modern universities, Sabine MacCormack suggests that ‘[e]ach present has its past’, and that the retrieval of this past is fundamental to understandings both of then and of now.³⁰ She goes on to recognize, though, that ‘it is possible to choose a past, along with appropriate methods of remembering it.’³¹ Any history, therefore, is the product of the knowledge, experiences, preferences, approaches and the other choices of its writer.

Each of MacCormack’s statements above rings true for titology. The past normally chosen for the title begins, and in many respects also ends, in the early modern period. The bulk of the criticism begins the narrative here, with the title appearing, in most of its modern glory – that is designative, descriptive, autonomous, brief, prior, promotional, authoritative, authorial, compulsory, integral – at some date in the sixteenth century, oftentimes as if from nowhere. The narrative generally ends at this point too because these sixteenth-century, these

²⁹ Roland Barthes, ‘The Discourse of History’, trans. Stephen Bann, in *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook*, ed. E. S. Shaffer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), III. 7-20 (p. 16). For a similar challenge to traditional perceptions of history, see Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (London and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). A concise summary of the debate, from a historian’s perspective, can be found in Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 86-105. The theme of an irrecoverable past unites the essays included in *Exemplaria* 3:1: see Peter L. Allen, ‘A Frame for the Text? History, Literary Theory, Subjectivity, and the Study of Medieval Literature’, *Exemplaria*, 3 (1991), 1-25.

³⁰ Sabine MacCormack, ‘How the Past Is Remembered: From Antiquity to Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Beyond’, in *The Past and Future of Medieval Studies*, ed. John Van Engen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), pp. 105-28 (p. 105). For a comparable view, see Allen, ‘A Frame for the Text?’, p. 2: ‘[t]he essays collected here discard the notion of a pure and unmediated knowledge of the past, instead showing a past that exists only in relation to the present.’

³¹ MacCormack, ‘How the Past Is Remembered’, p. 105.

nearly-modern titling practices need only undergo minimal and minor change for them to resemble and eventually become titles as they are understood, recognized and used today.

There was no need, then, for these accounts to reassess and modify the terminology, ideas and schema now commonplace in the field and so, with this common ground established, titology's synchronic studies, wielding a shared vocabulary, similar conceptual frameworks, and roughly the same point of departure, was able to hold sway. It has proved much simpler to omit a hazy, complicated premodern history, or perhaps to cursorily acknowledge past practices only to immediately reject them once nothing of titological consequence (or rather nothing familiar) has been identified within them. In titological accounts it is the title's recognizable past which proves the most appealing option. By beginning the title's history in the sixteenth century, its development can be linked to events, conditions, and advances whose dates and circumstances are traceable and, in all likelihood, well-known. The emergent narrative is at once linear, logical, and progressive; it is familiar and, through this familiarity, it is also desirable.

In titology, early modern titling practices constitute the recognizable and somewhat expedient predecessor of the modern. But in what precisely does this familiarity inhere? A good deal of their knowability can be seen to stem from the way in which books come to be produced in the early modern period. For example, expectations of where titles should be, ideas about what positions they should occupy in or in relation to texts, were often reinforced by the ways in which printed books started to be organized and assembled.³² Richard Sharpe offers a possible reason for this in his book on medieval Latin *tituli* in which he asserts that 'print in many instances stabilized the basic coordinates of author and title.'³³ The

³² Those critics who consider the place of the title include: Hoek, *La Marque du Titre*, pp. 1-2; Genette, *Paratexts*, pp. 64-5; Colin Symes, 'You Can't Judge a Book by Its Cover: The Aesthetics of Titles and Other Epitextual Devices', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 26 (1992), 17-26 (p. 20); Anne Ferry, *The Title to the Poem* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 1-3; Richard Sharpe, *Titulus: Identifying Medieval Latin Texts. An Evidence-Based Approach* (Brepols: Turnhout, 2003), p. 23.

³³ Sharpe, *Titulus*, p. 23.

stabilization of presence usually entails a certain regularization of location. So to take Sharpe's comments a little further, the positions that these coordinates are consistently assigned to, or more accurately are repeatedly confirmed in, are ones of priority, and this is a priority that has dual signification.³⁴

Titological criticism now considers the title to be a compulsory textual precursor: it appears before texts in terms of both space and time. For Hazard Adams, echoing the sentiments of D'Israeli two centuries previously, 'the title-object relation is one of words prior to and anticipatory of the object'.³⁵ From Genette's typically typological point of view, the title is seen to have four specific and 'obligatory' locations, all of which are found in advance of the text.³⁶ Anne Ferry, on the other hand, sees this relationship as more intrinsic: the area which directly precedes the text *is* the 'title space'.³⁷ However, the title comes to have priority in another sense as well. To be temporally and spatially first also evokes the title's priority in the sense that it becomes invested with an importance and an authority that permits it to appear before, to introduce, the text.³⁸ The title-page, as it takes shape in the early modern period, embodies this doubled sense of priority, as it is 'brought literally to the forefront' of printed books and begins to acquire increasingly authoritative roles: at first a descriptive and/or identificatory function, later a commercial one, and eventually a legal, authoritative status.³⁹ But the title's priority did not surface in print; *epigrammata*, *tituli*, *incipit*-headings, frontispieces, prefatory miniatures, and even (on the rare occasion of their inclusion) early title-pages all constitute premodern titling practices that exhibit some degree

³⁴ This study relies on the definition of 'priority, n. and adj.', in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), XII. 508-9. The dual application of the word in relation to the title has also been noticed by Hoek, *La Marque du Titre*, pp. 1-2. For comments on the priority of titles, see Hazard Adams, 'Titles, Titling, and Entitlement To', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 46 (1987), 7-21 (p. 19); Schneider, 'Titles in *Dubliners*', p. 195.

³⁵ Adams, 'Titles', p. 15.

³⁶ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 65.

³⁷ Ferry, *The Title to the Poem*, p. 2.

³⁸ For allusions to the authority of the title in its introductory position, see Ferry, *The Title to the Poem*, p. 2.

³⁹ Additional consideration of the various authoritative roles that early modern titles begin to develop (which are beyond the scope of this present investigation) can be found in Shevlin, 'The Evolution of the Title's Contractual Functions'.

of priority. As is often the case with print, it is not the medium itself, but rather the standardization (the roots of which, incidentally, are traceable to its manuscript forebears) it permits, promulgates and promotes, that leads to the internalization and widespread application of its forms, methods, and meanings within titology and also beyond.

A number of other preconceptions which now constellate around the title, both in the criticism and more widely, are also likely to owe their proliferation, although not often their instigation, to the titological privileging of print. Two assumptions encountered earlier in this discussion are significant here: namely, the notion that a title will aptly describe the work it entitles and that the author furnishes the work with this title. Without their stabilization in print, and specifically in the space of the title-page, without their production over and over, these suppositions may not necessarily have translated into the titological norm. Yet print does not standardize in and of itself. Standards can be set only with the reproduction of practice, and this is a process that printing presses helped to facilitate, enabling as they eventually did large-scale or mass production.

As similar formats are reproduced and trends begin to emerge, or rather can be retrospectively identified as doing so, assumptions as to position, purpose and source can converge spawning an additional role for the title, one on which modern titologists tend to fixate: the title as interpretive guide. Discussing the title of his novel *The Name of the Rose* in 1984, Umberto Eco laments that '[a] title is, unfortunately, in itself a key to interpretation.'⁴⁰ In the same year, in an article aiming to define and typologize the title, John Fisher emphatically maintains that '[t]he unique purpose of titling is hermeneutical: titles are names

⁴⁰ Umberto Eco, 'The Title and the Meaning', in *Reflections on 'The Name of the Rose'*, trans. William Weaver (London: Secker and Warburg, 1985), pp. 1-8 (p. 2).

which function as guides to interpretation.’⁴¹ Indeed, as far back as D’Israeli’s early titological commentary, the descriptive, directive title has figured large in discussions of the title: sometimes as an informing undercurrent, sometimes more overtly.⁴²

The steady increase in single text- or author-centred titological expositions from the early 1990s onwards suggests that, despite objections raised by several key figures in the area, the idea of the title as interpretive guide persists.⁴³ In 1987, responding to Fisher’s article of 1984, Adams questions the simplicity of the metaphor, pointing out that titles are not always ‘merely guides to interpretation’, that they are ‘often interpretations’ themselves, and goes on to recommend that ‘it is best to abandon the metaphor of a guide’ altogether.⁴⁴ The title’s prescriptive (para)textual role does not just endure but inflates in later titological studies, where it transforms, for Michael Seidel and Colin Symes, into the ‘manual’,

⁴¹ John Fisher, ‘Entitling’, *Critical Inquiry*, 11 (1984), 286-98 (p. 288). Genette, in reference to Eco, shares Fisher’s view of the title’s ubiquitous descriptive, guiding function: see Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 93. Other critics who describe the title as a guide include: E. A. Levenston, ‘The Significance of the Title in Lyric Poetry’, *Hebrew University Studies in Literature*, 6 (1978), 63-87 (p. 87); S. J. Wilshire, ‘The Roles of Titles in Identifying Literary Works’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 45 (1987), 403-8. The indicative title also has a place in premodern discussions of the title; however, there are some crucial differences as the discussion in the latter part of this chapter makes clear.

⁴² Studies that explicitly refer to the title’s guiding potential include: Kellman, ‘The Poetics of Titles’; Symes, ‘The Aesthetics of Titles’; Michael Seidel, ‘Running Titles’, in *Second Thoughts: A Focus on Rereading*, ed. David Galef (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), pp. 34-50; Greg Petersen, ‘Titles, Labels, Names: A House of Mirrors’, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 40 (2006), 29-43 (p. 37). For more implicit inclusions of this view, see Jerrold Levinson, ‘Titles’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 44 (1985), 29-39; Wilshire, ‘The Roles of Titles’; Whitmarsh, ‘The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre’; Giancarlo Maiorino, *First Pages: A Poetics of Titles* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008). That titles now serve as interpretive guides is also implied in Susanna Fein’s article which describes the need for editors to choose ‘accurate helpful handles for modern readers’: see Fein, ‘The Epistemology of Titles in Editing Whole-Manuscript Anthologies: The Lyric Sequence, in Particular’, *Poetica*, 71 (2009), 49-74 (p. 51). I am grateful to Susanna for allowing me to see copy of this article before its publication.

⁴³ Examples of single text or author-centred titological studies include: Amiel D. Vardi, ‘Why *Attic Nights*? Or What’s in a Name?’, *Classical Quarterly*, 43 (1993), 298-301; John Mulvihill, ‘Why Dickinson Didn’t Title’, *The Emily Dickinson Journal*, 5 (1996), 71-87; Schneider, ‘Titles in *Dubliners*’; Ibrahim Taha, ‘The Power of the Title: Why Have You Left the Horse Alone? by Mahmud Darwish’, *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 3 (2000), 66-83; Thomas C. Stillinger, ‘The Place of the Title (*Decameron*, Day One, Introduction)’, in *The ‘Decameron’ First Day in Perspective: Volume One of the ‘Lectura Boccaccii’*, ed. Elissa B. Weaver (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 29-56. For the only dedicated study of this kind, as far as I am aware, before the 1990s, see Helen Gardner, ‘The Titles of Donne’s Poems’, in *Friendship’s Garland: Essays Presented to Mario Praz*, ed. Vittorio Gabrieli (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1966), I. 189-207.

⁴⁴ Adams, ‘Titles’, p. 12. For similarly qualified statements on the title’s guiding role, see Wilshire, ‘The Roles of Titles’, p. 403; Petersen, ‘Titles, Labels, Names’, p. 36.

‘program’ and ‘conceptual schema’ against and according to which a work may, and indeed should, be read.⁴⁵

Whether the title aids interpretation, is an interpretation, or is vital to interpretation, its links with the text are an assumed constant. In order for these readings of and/or guides to reading the text to be authoritative they must originate with the author, in fact various titologists, including Adams and Jerrold Levinson, have deemed the author’s title to be the only ‘true’, ‘bonafide’, ‘proper’ one; thus, the title’s connections with the author are similarly endorsed.⁴⁶ While the title as an author-derived guide to a work is not quite born of print, the idea is certainly borne out and perpetuated by the layout that print confers (and by the title-page specifically). What is more, as titology equates the title’s beginnings with those of the medium of print, the ties between author, text and title, which are seen to develop out of these beginnings, are guaranteed as significant titular elements for posterity. It is important, however, to remember that it is later titologists who join these features together, making the links and creating the principles. Viewed in this way, the lasting currency of the guide metaphor seems to owe less to the standardizing effects of print than it does to modern scholars who seek to establish and promote (but give the impression they reaffirm) an early modern connection between title, text, and the author who creates both.⁴⁷ Titological conceptualizations of the title are thus exposed as constructions. The often self-serving reasons for such contrivances are considered in more detail below.

⁴⁵ For extensions of the ‘guide’ metaphor, following the order in which they are listed, see Seidel, ‘Running Titles’, pp. 49, 38; Symes, ‘The Aesthetics of Titles’, p. 19.

⁴⁶ The importance of the author’s title in titology is propounded by Levinson, ‘Titles’, p. 33; Adams, ‘Titles’, p. 13. However, the assumption is implicit in the majority of studies in this area.

⁴⁷ An intrinsic connection between text, title and author is posited frequently in titology, but is pursued particularly in Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Titles: Paraphrases on Lessing’, in *Notes to Literature*, ed. Rolf Teidemann, trans. Shierry Weber Nichol森 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), II. 3-11 (p. 11). It is also implicit in Hollander’s remarks on the title as a ‘statement of literary intention’: see Hollander, ‘A Note on the Theory of Titles’, p. 214.

2.1.4 The Construction of Necessity

This thesis's contention is not that printing alone creates the title's various roles of priority, guide, necessity, and so on. Instead, it suggests that print, through the gradual and progressive standardization of texts, and specifically their layouts, enables the title to be interpreted in these ways. Print enables the perpetuation of certain features, and it is the retrospective gaze that, often in an effort to make sense of and explicate these elements, seeks a coalescence of interrelated features, identifies a pattern, turns this into a set of rules, and thereby establishes the beginnings of a system. In short, the advent of print provides an accessible and convenient origin story, even a creation myth, for the title. It is difficult to criticize this kind of analysis, because it does, after all, represent the objectives of much literary and textual criticism; the partial and selective historicizing that informs this analysis is another story, however.

Titology's myopic historicism elevates those functions and forms of the title, which in diachronic terms would constitute the latter stages of its development, to the status of timeless, stable characteristics. As the previous section suggests, this short-sightedness makes for a much simpler and more coherent account, but additional motivations are discernible if the title's authorial and textual associations, the origins of which titology locates in the early modern period, are considered further.

Assumptions about the forms titles will take and the functions they will perform, as outlined above, occasionally assist in the dissemination of broader, totalizing suppositions regarding the title's (para)textual significance. For example, the links that titological theory forges between titles, texts and authors, and the historical justification it provides for these connections, advances the (distinctly modern) idea of the literary work as self-contained, coherent, and recognizably whole. The title is thus confirmed as an essential component of complete literary works, and, as an intrinsic element of their creation, production,

transmission, and reception, the implication is that this has always been the case. Indeed, notions of the title's integrality, necessity and even its naturalness in relation to literary productions are long-standing within the discipline. Even in the wake of postmodern modes of criticism which question, deconstruct and destabilize, these ideas continue to go unquestioned. For titology these associations represent the title's fundamental characteristics; from a diachronic perspective, though, they constitute aspects of the title that, due to insufficient historicizing, have mutated into assumptions.

Once the title can be considered an integral part of the whole work, it becomes indivisible – in physical, referential, conceptual, and legal terms – from it. This view has a protracted history in the area's criticism.⁴⁸ In 1975, Kellman remarks on the title's ability 'to enable us to observe the thing and to deal with it as a whole', and, while he suggests that some titles, notably those of what he deems 'non-literary works of art', are in his view 'extrinsic [...] even aesthetically irrelevant' to them, the main thrust of his argument is that, more often than not, '[t]he title derives from the work, points to the work, and verily *is* the work.'⁴⁹ Levinson is more insistent in his examination of titles a decade later: '[t]itles of artworks are often *integral parts* of them, constitutive of what such works are'.⁵⁰ Citations of Levinson's view in subsequent titological studies attest to its force within the discipline, but it is not until Adams's article of 1987, who argues that Levinson's various theses do not 'go far enough', that the now-prevailing position, which insists that titles are 'always' integral to works, is voiced explicitly.⁵¹ The indivisibility of the title from the work it denotes is now pervasive in the field: it runs implicitly through studies that elucidate specific titles or the

⁴⁸ The idea of the title's integrality is found in D'Israeli's early study in which he claims it is an 'important portion of every book': see D'Israeli, *Curiosities*, p. 289. A selection of additional titological pieces in which this view is adopted, or otherwise presupposed, includes: Levenston, 'The Significance of the Title in Lyric Poetry'; Fisher, 'Entitling'; Vardi, 'Why *Attic Nights*?'; Whitmarsh, 'The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre'.

⁴⁹ Kellman, 'The Poetics of Titles', pp. 153, 156.

⁵⁰ Levinson, 'Titles', p. 29.

⁵¹ Adams, 'Titles', p. 10. Later critics who directly draw on Levinson's theses include: Adams, 'Titles', pp. 9-10; Wilshire, 'The Role of Titles', p. 403.

titling practices of particular authors; it is also there in the notion that the title is the key to releasing the text's meaning; it is present in those accounts that conceive the title as synecdoche, where it is the part that represents the whole; and it is there too in what appears to be titology's most ubiquitous assumption about titles: that they always accompany texts, and, further still, that literary works necessitate them.⁵²

Concepts of integrality and necessity are difficult to extricate. In general terms, if something is integral to something else it is 'necessary to the completeness or integrity of th[at] whole'.⁵³ The proximity of these ideas in titology is made plain by Levinson, who, having set the integrality of titles to literary works as the first of his hypotheses, offers as his second the idea that the '[t]itles of artworks are plausibly *essential properties* of them.'⁵⁴ That this view runs deep in the discipline, indeed is one of its principle tenets, is made apparent by E. A. Levenston's rationalization that '[w]ithout some agreed label we would have no way of identifying a poem we wished to talk about, short of quoting the entire poem'.⁵⁵ In 1999, just over twenty years later, in a brief journalistic rumination on titles, Kevin Jackson relates an anecdote in which the logic behind the title's literary presence is invoked once again:

Enoch Soames [...] planned to issue a book of poems with no title at all: Rothenstein', Max Beerbohm reports, 'objected that the absence of title might be bad for the sale of a book. 'If,' he urged, 'I went into a bookseller's and said simply "Have you got?" or "Have you a copy of?" how would they know what I wanted?'⁵⁶

⁵² Interpretations of the title as synecdoche can be found in Levin, 'The Title as a Literary Genre', p. xxxiv; Symes, 'The Aesthetics of Title', pp. 18-20. For similar thoughts, where the title is read as 'microcosm' and 'epitome', respectively, see Adorno, 'Titles', p. 4; Seidel, 'Running Titles', p. 37.

⁵³ See 'integral, a.', in Simpson and Weiner, *OED*, VII. 1063-4.

⁵⁴ Levinson, 'Titles', p. 29.

⁵⁵ Levenston, 'The Significance of the Title in Lyric Poetry', p. 63.

⁵⁶ Kevin Jackson, 'Titles', in *Invisible Forms: A Guide to Literary Curiosities* (London: Picador, 1999), pp. 1-17 (pp. 15-6).

Such matter-of-fact statements regarding the title's indispensability are rife in the criticism.⁵⁷

Part of the allure (and so the endurance) of these claims appears to stem from their presentation as reasonable, obvious, uncontentious fact. Titles are needed, or so the criticism would have it, at the basic level of reference, and it is often at this point in titological narratives that rare instances of historicizing are found. According to Levenston, for example, the act of titling was created for purely practical purposes, in that 'the need for a reference label seems to have been the first and primary reason for providing a title'.⁵⁸ Titles arise, in Levenston's view, from pragmatic necessity; they exist, first and foremost, to distinguish between individual works. Few, if any, titologists disagree with this.

Indeed, the proposition is hard to refute. It cannot be denied that the title now operates as a reference tool: it gives a name to the work (so that it can be referred to, found, remembered, discussed) and, through that naming, guarantees its individuality and its identity.⁵⁹ If past practices are considered, as is so rarely the case in titology, then it would appear that chiefly practical considerations motivated the use of *tituli* with texts in Roman antiquity.⁶⁰ These strips of parchment, bearing the names or, more frequently, the descriptions of works, authors' names, relevant dates, locations, as well as a variety of other information, were affixed to the end of the *volume*, near to the *umbilici* round which the sheets of papyrus or parchment containing texts were wrapped.⁶¹ They seem to have served entirely referential purposes in that they were attached so that they projected out of the roll so

⁵⁷ Other studies that refer to the necessity of titles for literary compositions include: D'Israeli, 'Titles', p. 289; Eco, 'The Title and the Meaning', pp. 2-3; Symes, 'The Aesthetics of Titles', p. 17. Petersen, summarizing the debate in relation to the titles of paintings, provides examples of others who advocate this point of view: see Petersen, 'Titles, Labels, and Names', pp. 32-3. The assumption is also implied in Hollander's remarks that in the absence of a title 'some other device is probably being used to do the title's work': see Hollander, 'A Note on the Theory of Titles', p. 217. It is similarly implicit in Whitmarsh's claim that 'there is no reason to presume[...] that consistent titling [was] inappropriate' in antiquity: see Whitmarsh, 'The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre', p. 589.

⁵⁸ Levenston, 'The Significance of the Title in Lyric Poetry', p. 69.

⁵⁹ See the comments along these lines in Derrida, 'Before the Law', p. 188.

⁶⁰ Aside from those studies focussed on this period, antiquity receives only passing mention in titology: see Levin, 'The Title as a Literary Genre', p. xxiv; Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 64; Sharpe, *Titulus*, p. 45.

⁶¹ For further information on *volumen*, *tituli*, *umbilici*, and other features of ancient book production, see Harold Whetstone Johnston and Mary Johnston, *The Private Life of the Romans* (Chicago: Foresman, 1932), pp. 393-99.

as to be visible when stored in either *capsa* (wooden boxes) or *armaria* (cupboards).⁶² From this evidence, it seems that some of the earliest titling practices confirm the title in its functional origins.

Whether these labels or title-tags are the exact equivalents of modern titles, however, is questionable. They seem similar in that they might name or describe the work(s) to which they are fastened, but this was not their only, nor necessarily their main, function. They could also include a range of additional information which is nowadays considered extraneous to the title, and, in this way, they stand at quite some distance from modern titles which, in terms of the information they contain, tend to be names only (or primarily). Furthermore, it is difficult to know which element performs the referential function: it might be the names of the works; it might be the authors' names; it could be the combination of all the information that a particular strip includes. In fact, it is a misconception – one that is widely held – that only the title/name can identify, and so provide a reference for, a work. Works did not always have names in premodern times and, when names were provided, they were not always favoured as a referencing device. The premodern period holds a wealth of relevant examples (many of which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter), including the use of numbering to differentiate Babylonian and Assyrian clay tablets, and the manipulation of size, shape and layout to distinguish different clay tablets in Sumer.⁶³ Titles, it would seem, have not always been a referential necessity.⁶⁴

The prevalence of this view within titology (and beyond) becomes more understandable when it is considered that the received history of the title commonly opens at some point in the early modern period. This is a time when titling practices begin to

⁶² An explanation of the functions of *tituli* when stored in *capsa* and *armaria* is available in Johnston and Johnston, *Romans*, p. 294.

⁶³ A more detailed account of these practices is found in Eleanor Robson, 'The Clay Tablet Book in Sumer, Assyria, and Babylonia', in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 67-83.

⁶⁴ A fuller account of ancient titling practices can be found in the latter part of the next chapter.

homogenize, when they start to assume more recognizable forms, and evolve into the preferred method for identifying a work. If the title is conceptualized within such limits then it is bound to be regarded as integral and necessary to a work, not just in referential terms, but in physical and conceptual ones too.

In a very recent essay focussing specifically on early modern titling, Ceri Sullivan cites the Star Chamber Decree of 1637, and its inclusion of ‘titles in the prefatory matter which was to be licensed’, as some of the earliest evidence for ‘the view that the title was integral to a book’.⁶⁵ Two points can be made which pull Sullivan’s argument into question. Firstly, the decree’s reference to titles occurs at the head a list of ‘annexed’ features, which includes ‘Epistles, Prefaces, Proems, Preambles, Introductions, Tables, Dedications’.⁶⁶ Set within its original context, then, the decree seems to set out more of a list of possible inclusions than of absolute requirements. Secondly, the decree stipulates only that these features, if present, must be ‘lawfully licenced and authorized’ and ‘entred into the Registers Booke of the Company of Stationers’, not that all works must have them.⁶⁷

Against Sullivan, it seems the decree of 1637 says less about the title as an integral part of a text than it does about the integral part that titles start to play in the regulation and censorship of texts. Eleanor F. Shevlin, in an article considering the title’s early modern contractual functions, notices:

[w]hile an interest in titles as an integral part of texts existed on the part of some (if not many) authors at th[is] time, the legal, cultural, and market conditions for them to follow through [...] did not.⁶⁸

Over the course of the seventeenth century, with legislation such as the Star Chamber Decree, the Ordinance for the Regulation of Printing of 1643 and the Licensing Act of 1662, and into the eighteenth, with the Statute of Anne of 1710 (generally regarded as the earliest copyright

⁶⁵ Sullivan, ‘Indications of Genre in Early Modern Titles’, p. 644.

⁶⁶ *A decree of Starre-Chamber, concerning printing, made the eleventh day of July last part. 1637* (New York and Amsterdam: Da Capo, 1969), pp. 7-8.

⁶⁷ *A decree of Starre-Chamber*, p. 8.

⁶⁸ Shevlin, ‘The Evolution of the Title’s Contractual Functions’, p. 54.

law), a work's title became an increasingly important feature in the legal control of printed texts. Not one of these laws, however, states that a title is integral and/or necessary, legally or otherwise, to a work.⁶⁹

It is difficult for titological studies in the synchronic mode to avoid such potentially misleading assumptions. By considering the titling practices of a specific period in isolation, the temptation is to locate the origins of the title or one of its various functions in a specific event, situation or innovation within that specific timeframe. Such titological studies are encumbered by their near-sightedness, and by their disregard for the title's past, in particular; as a consequence, titology, in its current synchronic form, actively promotes a skewed and inadequate understanding of past and present practices.

Titology, as it stands today, can be seen to construct and endorse a specifically modern conception of the title. Yes, titles can be seen as integral and necessary elements in the production of literature, of all modes and genres *now*. Yes, they can have a range of established positions, forms and styles *now*. And, yes, they can identify, describe, reveal, authorize, legitimize, attract and market the work to which they are attached *now*. But, as this thesis has shown (and continues to show), they have not always done so. While some recent titological studies, particularly those with an early modern focus, have begun to consider the title as a gradual accumulation of functions, indicating that literary titling is a constructed rather than natural process, their limited purview automatically presupposes the title's (para)textual presence, which has the contrary effect of reinforcing the title's naturalness, its always-already-thereness, for the literary work.

⁶⁹ Further questions as to the title's referential and interpretive necessariness are raised in a psychological experiment on remembering by Frederic C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 63-94 (p. 82): 'It would, I think, be a matter of some interest to try to discover how far titles of stories in general, headlines in newspapers, and, in fact, all such general initial labels influence perceiving and remembering. Some unpublished experiments carried out in Cambridge by the late Prof. Bernard Muscio, suggested strongly that their importance is commonly exaggerated, and my own results, for what they are worth, point in the same direction.'

The most cogent voicing of the title's constructedness is found in Shevlin's article of 1999, and, given that it appears in a journal dedicated to (and named for) book history, a field in which diachronic perspectives predominate, this comes as no great surprise. 'The modern title', Shevlin argues, 'is a historically determined notion', which means that 'properties such as a summarizing function, an authoritative status, or a contractual nature are not inherent attributes, but rather are features ascribed to titles over time.'⁷⁰ In order to realise these assertions fully, a detailed diachronic reconsideration of the title would be required and this is, of course, beyond the reach of Shevlin's essay. Indeed, a fully historicized account of the title could, and should, stretch to several volumes and, thus far, a project along more diachronic lines has not been attempted.

2.1.5 Titology's Premodern Gap

If the concept of the title is historically determined, then a diachronic, or at least a historically informed, approach is presumably a prerequisite for titology. This is far from the case. The discipline is dominated by a synchronic outlook which does not view the title as a product of centuries of development, as an accumulation, amalgamation, and distillation of previous practices, but instead adopts a distinctively modern idea of what a title is and applies this indiscriminately. To take the first of these points, in Genette's paradigmatic schematization, as in the bulk of extant titological discussions, premodern titling practices are barely, and then only briefly, alluded to.⁷¹ With one, short paragraph, Genette covers the literary title's entire prehistory, and those developments in form and usage occurring in the vast period that

⁷⁰ Shevlin, 'The Evolution of the Title's Contractual Functions', pp. 45, 44.

⁷¹ This obviously excludes those studies that focus on the premodern period, which include: Daly 'Entitulature'; Revilo P. Oliver, 'The First Medicean MS of Tacitus and the Titulature of Ancient Books', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 82 (1951), 232-61; Vardi, 'Why Attic Nights?'; Mulvihill, 'For Public Consumption: The Origin of Titling the Short Poem', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 97 (1998), 190-205; Sharpe, *Titulus*; Whitmarsh, 'The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre'; Heyworth, 'Recovering the Title'; Fein, 'The Epistemology of Titles'. However, as this select list show, a premodern focus does not necessarily preclude the imposition of a modern perception of the title (see the articles of Oliver, Vardi and Whitmarsh in particular).

stretches from antiquity until the late fifteenth century are dealt with in just six sentences.⁷²

Prior to Genette's laconic treatment, few overt considerations of the title's early existence can be found. In an article from 1978, eight years before Genette's first lecture on titles at the University of Chicago, Levenston offers a slightly longer (stretching to two paragraphs), but less precise, description of the early development of titling in the context of lyric poetry. He traces a vague, linear narrative from the initial numbering of poems to the lack of titles for Old English poetry, through to the titles sometimes attached to Chaucer's shorter lyrics and on to the 'profound effect' printing has upon methods of titling; yet, Levenston's admission that he 'is not sure at what point in the history of poetry the practice of giving [...] titles became widespread' confirms the general hesitancy which suffuses his account.⁷³ Two years later, set within the context of his book-length study of genre, Alastair Fowler presents what seems to be, at first, a more historically-informed picture of the title. Although his main focus is modern literature, Fowler offers some reflections on classical, medieval and Jacobean titular kinds; however, diachronic considerations quickly give way to synchronic specificities. Indeed, what limited consideration there is appears to be part of a distancing strategy in which earlier practices, like the *incipit* or the motto, serve as primitive predecessors against which the 'comparatively recent' device of the title can be measured.⁷⁴ The uncertainty about the title's prehistory, and the subsequent distancing of it, evident in the titology of Levenston, Fowler and others too, can be explained in part by the lack of existing evidence for antecedental practices and by the incomplete nature of much of that which otherwise survives. These evidential deficiencies also suggest a possible motivation for the

⁷² Genette, *Paratexts*, pp. 64-5. Another brief mention of the title's prehistory can be found on pp. 55-6.

⁷³ Levenston, 'The Significance of the Title in Lyric Poetry', p. 70.

⁷⁴ Alastair Fowler, 'Titles', in *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), pp. 92-8 (p. 92).

glossing over or in some cases the complete elision of this period elsewhere in the discipline.⁷⁵

Omission of the title's prehistory does appear to be the popular, and in most cases, considering the selectivity and imprecision of many attempts to historicize, the best policy in titology. In the years directly following Genette's influential exposition, diachronic considerations of the title remain in the minority, and this is in spite of the stress he places on the 'wholly inceptive', provisional character of his descriptive musings.⁷⁶ Apart from the occasional allusion to a distant past lying somewhere beyond the scope of the study in hand (as demonstrated in the studies of Adams, Ferry and Maiorino, for example), the title's prehistory is insignificant for, and has no place within, modern titology.⁷⁷ Wolfgang Karrer's essay of the early 1990s provides the exception. He divides his exploration of the intertextuality of titles and mottoes into two parts: one entitled 'Theory', the other 'History'. The scope of Karrer's review is commendable and thus far unsurpassed, stretching as it does from 'oral cultures' through to 'electronic media'; nevertheless, the various treatments he accords the individual stages in the title's development are symptomatic of long-standing trends in the criticism.⁷⁸ 'Print cultures', Karrer claims, 'change everything', which accounts for his extended treatment of print and digital practices: the paragraphs of which are twice the length of those that handle their oral and scriptural precedents.⁷⁹ The brevity of these accounts, especially if weighed against their relative durations, suggests that Karrer's treatment of the title's early development is somewhat reductive. Although Karrer makes a number of valid points, regarding the effect of oral formulas, scribal conventions and initial cataloguing procedures on early titling practices, these are, for the most part, unsubstantiated,

⁷⁵ Hahn notices a similar preference for omission but in the context of 'larger debates of academic discourse': see Hahn, 'The Premodern Text', pp. 5-6.

⁷⁶ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 14. The phrase in the original French is 'toute inchoative': see Genette, *Seuils*, p. 19

⁷⁷ For examples of this allusive treatment, see Adams, 'Titles'; Ferry, *The Title to the Poem*; Maiorino, *First Pages*.

⁷⁸ Karrer, 'Titles and Mottoes', pp. 128, 129.

⁷⁹ Karrer, 'Titles and Mottoes', p. 129.

with other critics cited in the place of supporting material evidence. Despite a confused, oversimplified trajectory, which recounts the title's sudden materialization in written cultures, Karrer at least grants these earlier phases some consideration, but it is a consideration tempered, as is so frequently the case in the field, by modern assumptions about the title.⁸⁰ In those rare instances when titological studies include the premodern period within their purview, they routinely apply and are, as this thesis argues, inhibited by modern ideas, understandings and experiences of the title.

In its present synchronic form, titology valorizes the modern title. The discipline rarely questions the wider applicability and validity of the concept, and acknowledgements of its constructedness are rarer still. Scholars in the area, however, do occasionally note the differences between modern titles and their antecedental practices. As early as 1961, Wayne C. Booth notes in an aside to his discussion of reliable commentary in modern works: 'how much more importance titles and epigraphs take on in modern works'.⁸¹ Fourteen years later, John Hollander locates what he believes is an early form of 'modern titling' in Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* of 1633, and he goes on to differentiate between these 'expressive or essential descriptions' and past practices.⁸² It is only in the last two decades that scholarship has moved beyond merely noticing such differences. Instead of marginalizing and omitting previous titling practices, several recent studies have started to take account of them. Susanna Fein's very recent illumination of the modern editor's role in the titling of early works and John Mulvihill's reconsideration of the origins of titling short poems, for example, both place medieval titling practices at the centre of their discussions.⁸³

⁸⁰ Karrer, 'Titles and Mottoes', p. 129.

⁸¹ Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 198.

⁸² Hollander, 'A Note on the Theory of Titles', p. 220.

⁸³ A number of other studies from the last twenty years also identify the differences between modern titles and earlier forms, including Shevlin, 'The Evolution of the Title's Contractual Functions'; Sharpe, *Titulus*; Sullivan, 'Indications of Genre in Early Modern Titles'.

Very few titologists, on the other hand, recognize the far-reaching currency and influence that the modern title now commands. That said, at the surprisingly early date of 1943, Lloyd W. Daly observes: '[i]t is very difficult for us today to forget our preconceptions as to the necessity or appropriateness of using a title in every instance.'⁸⁴ Daly's focus on pre-Ciceronian material, for which modern ideas about the title would seem to have little relevance, could partly explain his comments; yet the indiscriminate application of these ideas in other studies of premodern or early modern titling would suggest that Daly's stance is atypical. A little under forty years later, Jacques Derrida includes a description of the title's characteristics in an essay that addresses the question of what literature is. Derrida does not offer a general typology of timeless, essential features here, but rather a list of the things 'we think we know' about titles, and this is a knowledge – of the ways in which they function, the forms and positions they assume and the ways in which they signify – that we share now.⁸⁵ It is the modern title that Derrida outlines specifically.

Another decade elapses before the constructedness of current understandings of the title receives further critical attention. In 1992, Symes observes 'the way children are socialized into the material practices of art' so that 'they may come to accept the dogmas of authorship and titles'.⁸⁶ Even as Symes acknowledges that the expectation of and attendant expectations about titles are learnt, he does not consider how or why this learning process comes to be. It is not until Shevlin's study of early modern titling in 1998 that these questions are taken up, and the title as a historically constituted concept is given clear articulation.⁸⁷ But, aside from these sparse observations, there has been no recent, concerted effort to move the discipline beyond the confines of the modern title.

⁸⁴ Daly, 'Entitulation', p. 30. This quotation also provides the epigraph to the first part of the previous chapter 'Titles: Now and Then' (p. 1).

⁸⁵ Derrida, 'Before the Law', in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 181-220 (p. 188) [emphasis added]. This quotation appears in full in the preceding chapter 'Titles: Now and Then' (p. 1).

⁸⁶ Symes, 'The Aesthetics of Titles', p. 17.

⁸⁷ See Shevlin, 'The Evolution of the Title's Contractual Functions', p. 45.

That no forceful challenge has arisen from those accounts (small in number though they are) that choose premodern titling as their subject is particularly curious. In 1951, eight years after Daly's warning about the potentially disruptive effects of modern preconceptions in title studies, Revilo P. Oliver publishes an extensive study on what he calls the 'titulature' of ancient books. At first glance, Oliver's use of the term titulature seems to signal an affinity with the earlier comments of Daly, in that it allows for a broader understanding of how and in what ways titling practices are constituted at this time. The entire premise of Oliver's argument, however, is that the scribe of the first Medicean manuscript 'did not understand that *Ab excessu Divi Augusti* was the title of the work he was copying, for he has everywhere treated it as an integral part of a text which he has evidently made no effort to construe.'⁸⁸ Throughout the essay, Oliver seeks the title, in its discrete, self-contained, prior and, therefore, modern form.

At a distance of some forty years, Amiel D. Vardi resumes the search in his discussion of Gellius's *Noctes Atticae* in which a correspondence between modern and premodern ideas of the title is assumed. The relevance of the term 'title' as it is now understood also remains unquestioned in Tim Whitmarsh's more recent article 'The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre'. A year previous to Whitmarsh, Thomas C. Stillinger considers the opening rubric of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, but, after promisingly identifying the expansiveness of early titling practices in his opening, he quickly reverts to the 'title in the modern sense, the proper name of the work by itself'.⁸⁹ It is this unwillingness to interrogate current understandings of the title that medievalist Morton W. Bloomfield alludes to in the introduction to his book of Latin *incipits*, he notices that '[m]uch confusion has resulted from treating medieval titles as standard titles, for the standard title is the child of the printing

⁸⁸ Oliver, 'The Titulature of Ancient Books', p. 235.

⁸⁹ Stillinger, 'The Place of the Title', p. 30.

press.’⁹⁰ While this thesis does not share Bloomfield’s opinion as to the title’s origins, it does agree with his general principle: premodern titling practices, as they are (sometimes) found within manuscripts and incunabula, represent something very different to their modern (in many cases printed) renderings. When titological studies unthinkingly deploy modern concepts of the title in premodern contexts they produce problematic (because insufficiently theorized and often inadequately historicized), ultimately unconvincing arguments.

It must be said that the persistence and universal application of the modern title, although discernible in a number of earlier studies, owes much to Genette. Whether intentional or not, Genette’s chapter on titles comes to function as a taxonomy or, in his own words, a ‘virtual system’, for later scholars who begin to apply the categories and principles, widely and diversely but, for the most part, without any critique of them.⁹¹ Differences in time period, medium, location, social and cultural conditions and so forth are subsumed (and silenced) under the banner of theory. As Genette himself admits, at the end of his introduction to *Seuils*, his is ‘a synchronic not diachronic study – an attempt at a general picture, not a history’.⁹² He continues: ‘[t]his remark is prompted not by any disdain whatever for the historical dimension but, once again, by the belief that it is appropriate to define objects before one studies their evolution.’⁹³ For Genette, history is a separate issue; it plays no part in the definition, or indeed the theorizing, of titles.

This thesis challenges Genette’s atemporal approach by asking how precise definition of the title can be possible if evolution, the very thing that has shaped it into what it is today, is not taken into account. It is not alone in this belief. Historical dictionaries, like those produced by the Oxford University Press, attest to the importance, or at least the potential usefulness, of tracing the meanings and uses of ideas and/or terms over time, in order to

⁹⁰ Morton Bloomfield, *Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, 1100-1500 AD* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1979), p. 1.

⁹¹ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 57.

⁹² Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 13.

⁹³ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 13.

achieve as comprehensive, if not necessarily accurate, a definition as possible. Titology as it currently stands, then, offers only a partial account of titling practices. At the end of his introductory remarks, Genette places *Seuils* ‘at the very provisional service of what – thanks to others – will perhaps come after’; in spite of his synchronic inclinations, Genette hopes that the various histories of the paratext will be written.⁹⁴

So far a comprehensive diachronic study of the title has proved elusive. Having said this, a survey of the past criticism reveals that titology, in the diachronic mode, predates Genette. In 1977, Harry Levin delivered his Presidential Address to the Modern Humanities Research Association on the subject of literary titles; his discussion, although predominantly synchronic in its consideration of individual authors’ ‘modes and processes of titling’, stands alone in that it does not generalize or circumvent diachronic issues.⁹⁵ Even though Levin considers, by his own admission, only ‘the possibilities rather than charting the ground’, his article provides the most extensive historical account of literary titles to date, and so occupies, alongside Genette’s later chapter, a seminal position in the field. No subsequent attempt has been made to map a comprehensive history of the title, and this lag is no doubt due to the enormity of such an endeavour. As Levin acknowledges at the close of his address, the task of ‘[c]ompiling an inventory, [of] tracing a history, [of] laying out a taxonomy, [of] ultimately encompassing the syntax, the semantics, and the stylistics’ of literary titles, is one which lies with the skills and expertise of many scholars rather than a few.⁹⁶

In recent years a number of studies have started to historically place and thereby trace the development of literary titling practices. Notable examples include Mulvihill’s 1998 consideration of the manuscript contexts of medieval lyric titling practices, Sharpe’s 2003 book-length study of the origins and continuing utility of the medieval Latin *titulus*, and Susanna Fein’s 2009 exploration of the titular negotiations that editors of medieval texts must

⁹⁴ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 15.

⁹⁵ Levin, ‘The Title as a Literary Genre’, p. xxiv.

⁹⁶ Levin, ‘The Title as a Literary Genre’, p. xxxv.

make. Although their focus is often very specific and though modern concepts of the title continue to hold sway, such discussions have begun to bridge the premodern gap within titology. Building on arguments put forward in two previous articles on the subject of premodern titling practices (published in 2008 and 2009), this thesis seeks to advance a diachronic titological project.⁹⁷

It does not, however, try to establish a linear, progressive, and cohesive narrative of the title through premodernity; the past it traces instead is far more complex – fraught with discontinuities, contradictions, fissures, absences – than has been recognized hitherto. Neither does it privilege history over theory (or indeed other forms of enquiry); nor does it choose diachronic readings at the expense of synchronic alternatives. On the contrary, the thesis contends that the separation of these approaches in previous studies limits and inhibits the accounts of titling practice they provide, and it proposes instead that these methodologies should be combined, allowing the differences in perspective to inform each other. How this might be achieved, and to what possible ends, is considered at length in the final part of this chapter.

2.2 The Title in Premodern Literary Criticism

There is [...] no substitute to listening to the past in the words and terms of those who were alive in it.

(Sabine MacCormack)⁹⁸

Loving the past is all very well, and honouring its objects may have its compensations, but the bold ambition to explore its difference from and affinity to ourselves [...] is the only way to sustain our relation to the dead.

(Sarah Kay)⁹⁹

⁹⁷ See Gibbons, 'The Manuscript Titles of *Truth*'; Gibbons, 'Reading Premodern Titles'.

⁹⁸ MacCormack, 'How the Past Is Remembered', p. 119.

⁹⁹ Sarah Kay, 'Analytical Survey 3: The New Philology', in *New Medieval Literatures*, ed. David Lawton, Wendy Scase and Rita Copeland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), III. 295-326 (pp. 320-21)

2.2.1 Questioning Modern Theory

There is a doubling of objectives in this thesis. On the one hand, it attempts to reformulate the discipline of titology in the light of previously neglected premodern titling practices, as the foregoing discussion makes clear; on the other, it also initiates a reconsideration of these antecedental forms in the light of modern titological theory, but, unlike previous efforts, this study acknowledges differences and irregularities rather than trying to assimilate or exclude them. A dualistic approach of this sort brings with it a variety of problems. Chief among these is that the conjunction of premodern subject and modern theory is not always considered to be a valid or important one in English literary studies. As the first part of the chapter illustrates, premodernity – which encompasses anything occurring in advance of the Renaissance – usually lies outside the remit of modern theoretical considerations, meriting only the occasional abstracted and/or nostalgic mention. On other side of the fence, scholars conducting research in the premodern era have perceived, and in some quarters still perceive, the use of contemporary theory in the field as a troubling, potentially diversionary bugbear, and it is this resistance that the thesis now turns to its attention to.

Theory proves something of a dilemma for premodern studies. The potency of debates in this area is evident not only in their intensity but also in their longevity.¹⁰⁰ Even now, an explicitly theoretical approach to premodern material is seen to require some justification. The need to explain the selection and application of a particular theory – whether feminist, psychoanalytic, deconstructionist, or other – is borne out by the (sometimes protracted) introductions to studies deploying one or more of these approaches.¹⁰¹ Several of the earlier issues of *Exemplaria* – one of the first journals dedicated to theoretically-informed medieval

¹⁰⁰ For several outlines of these debates, see Florence Ridley, 'Questions without Answers – Yet or Ever? New Critical Modes and Chaucer', *Chaucer Review*, 16 (1981), 101-6; Hahn, 'The Premodern Text'; Peter L. Allen, 'A Frame for the Text? History, Literary Theory, Subjectivity, and the Study of Medieval Literature', *Exemplaria*, 3 (1991), 1-25; Kay, 'The New Philology'.

¹⁰¹ Recent examples of these justificatory prefaces include: Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 1-8; Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition*, pp. 1-25.

and early modern research – include essays which seek to validate the place of theory in premodern studies.¹⁰² Paul Strohm adopts a subtler defence in his *Theory and the Premodern Text*; instead of the standard extended reasonings, the ““practical” theory’ or ‘theory *with* the text’ Strohm enacts throughout his pages is set directly against its ‘hypothetical opposite – “pure” theory, uncorrected or unchastened by sustained contact with a particular text’ or ““theory” for its own sake’.¹⁰³

It seems that the use of theory of any denomination in the premodern field necessitates some degree of explanation and/or qualification. And, it is a custom this thesis, in its mediation between the contemporary and the previous, between the theoretical and the material, between titology and titling practice, has been unable to avoid. Although it does differ in one major respect: refusing to cast theory as a problem, it tries to move away from the presentation of theory as difficult or hazardous for the study of premodernity. In place of the customary justifications, then, the thesis attempts a negotiation, an approach posited but, as this thesis shows, never fully explored by theorists and medievalists. In doing so, it gestures to the potential reconciliation of premodern texts and modern theory and, for this study specifically, past titling practices and present titological models.

That justification became an essential element of theoretical readings of premodernity from the early 1990s has much to do with the institutional status of theory, especially within the humanities, during the period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s. Developing Raman Selden’s characterization of this period as ‘the age of theory’, Peter D. McDonald notes, in his consideration of the vogue for the phrase ‘after theory’ in critical titles, that it was also a ‘particularly disputatious episode’, and he subsequently suggests that it might be more

¹⁰² See, for example, Hahn, ‘The Premodern Text’; Allen, ‘A Frame for the Text?’; H. Ansgar Kelly, ‘Introduction: Are the Middle Ages Theoretically Recalcitrant?’, *Exemplaria*, 7 (1995), 1-7.

¹⁰³ Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. xi.

appropriately called ‘the age of the theory wars’.¹⁰⁴ However tongue-in-cheek McDonald’s renaming, it rightly captures the for-and-against dynamic debates regarding the legitimacy and usefulness of theory assumed during these decades.

In the case of premodern studies the polarization of opinion, either for or against critical theory, was particularly acute. In reaction to the ascendance of literary theory across the academy from the 1950s onwards, a number of scholars in the field began to advocate, as Thomas Hahn puts it in an early issue of *Exemplaria*, an “‘against-theory” stance’.¹⁰⁵ Using the appearance of *Exemplaria* in 1989 as a rough gauge of theory’s influence in premodern studies, it appears that the take up of theory was much slower here than in other areas of literary study.¹⁰⁶ Oppositions, as a result, only begin to be heard in the later 1980s, but, aided by the burgeoning ‘after theory’ or ‘post-theoretical’ narratives of the 1990s, they rapidly gained momentum.¹⁰⁷

The usual line of attack adopted by such anti-theory arguments is the questioning of the appropriateness and value of considering premodern texts in the light of contemporary literary theories. Writing in 1995, H. Ansgar Kelly summarizes the dissenting argument, thus:

there is a widespread feeling that medievalists are resistant to accepting more recent critical theory, either because they reject the theories as invalid *per se*, or because they judge them as not applicable to the Middle Ages – which is as much as to say that the Middle Ages themselves are theoretically recalcitrant.¹⁰⁸

For anti-theoretical medievalists, theories conceived in the current epoch are seen to have little or no relevance to premodern texts. Particular controversy surrounds the new terminologies, categories and explanations associated with such approaches, and when they

¹⁰⁴ Raman Selden, ‘Introduction’, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: From Formalism to Poststructuralism*, ed. Raman Selden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), VIII. 1-10 (p. 1); Peter D. McDonald, ‘Ideas of the Book and Histories of Literature: After Theory?’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 121(2006), 214-28 (p. 216).

¹⁰⁵ Hahn, ‘The Premodern Text’, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰⁶ Allen J. Frantzen also notices the slower response to theory within medieval studies in Frantzen, ‘Preface’, in *Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporary Theory in Medieval Studies*, ed. Frantzen (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. ix-xv (p. xi).

¹⁰⁷ On ‘after theory’ narratives, see McDonald, ‘Ideas of the Book’. On the ‘post-theoretical’ moment, see Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁰⁸ Kelly, ‘Introduction’, p. 2.

are applied to premodern writings the resultant readings are habitually decried as anachronistic and misrepresentative. At the beginning of his now widely cited *Medieval Theory of Authorship* of 1988, A. J. Minnis forcefully argues:

[i]n recent years, in discussions of late-medieval literature, it has become fashionable to employ a number of critical terms which derive their meaning from modern, not medieval, literary theory. This practice can to some extent be interpreted as a tacit admission of defeat.¹⁰⁹

Although speaking of the later Middle Ages, Minnis's assessment remains difficult to dispute when broadened out to premodern texts in general. In the context of titology, those terms such as the transtext, paratext, and peritext would not have been familiar to premodern readers/listeners nor would they have habitually distinguished the various elements of the texts they encountered, whether oral/aural, written on vellum or parchment, inscribed on some other surface or printed on paper, in these ways. That said, the conclusions that Minnis and others draw from this are rather less persuasive: firstly, the use of modern theoretical terms in relation medieval texts does not necessarily indicate flawed or lazy scholarship; secondly, a complete disavowal of contemporary theory may not be the only solution to these terminological and conceptual disparities; and thirdly, there is no reason why medieval and modern literary theories should be mutually exclusive.¹¹⁰

Yet the subsequent movement in defence of theory readily accepted the criticisms put forward by anti-theorists. Rather than directly addressing the accusations themselves – probing why modern terms should be seen as irrelevant and problematic, for example, or asking how and on what terms the recovery of medieval literary theory might be possible – pro-theoretical responses instead chose to moderate their theories. Accordingly, academics might decide to use theoretical approaches, but they must temper their chosen approach with

¹⁰⁹ A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn. (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1988), pp. 1-8 (p. 1).

¹¹⁰ Minnis's 'against theory' stance is shared by Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987). It must be noted that, after their initial resistance, both Minnis and Patterson utilize theoretical frames in later years.

the actuality of the premodern text: specifically its facts, its history, its materiality. Bruce Holsinger and Sarah Kay also notice this shift from the abstract to the concrete, from theory to facts and history in literary criticism.¹¹¹ The lengthy justifications of those premodern theoretical projects published towards the tail-end of the theory wars discussed above often serve such qualificatory purposes. Richard K. Emmerson encapsulates prevailing attitudes to the reification of the abstract through the concrete in his review of medieval studies at the beginning of the millennium: '[t]he theory is worn lightly, used to pose questions and open up new approaches, rather than smothering the medieval text.'¹¹² While the overall sentiments of these pro-theoretical moderations are positive, the implication is that there can be too much theory and that this excess has the potential to overwhelm the premodern text. On both sides of the polemic, then, theory is constituted as the problem.

Yet, it need not be so. In spite of its dominance, there is an alternative to the polemical to-ing and fro-ing over theory in premodern studies. Contemporary theory does not have to be set in opposition with premodern materiality. The distance between modernity and premodernity that anti-theorists commonly evoke is incontrovertible but this need not mean that the two are incompatible. Peter L. Allen is one among many critics who contend that 'to know the past as it was is impossible; all we can do is know it as it appears to us in the present'; indeed, the mediation of the past through the present is the theme that unites the essays in the issue of *Exemplaria* in which Allen's article appears.¹¹³ If this perspective is accepted, modern theory can be seen as a necessary and, for current generations of scholars, an indivisible part of current comprehensions of the past. As a consequence, the use of contemporary theory with premodern texts need not be justified, as Strohm explains:

¹¹¹ Holsinger, *Premodern Condition*, pp. 10-12; Kay, 'The New Philology', p. 313.

¹¹² Richard K. Emmerson, 'Medieval Studies in the Beginning of the New Millenium', in *Vital Signs: English in Medieval Studies in Twenty-First Century Higher Education*, ed. Elaine Treharne (Leicester: English Association, 2002), II. 17-27 (p. 20).

¹¹³ Allen, 'A Frame for the Text?', p. 5.

[r]efusing an easy assimilation to the text's self-representations, theory justifies itself, and even some of the difficulties it occasionally presents, by offering a standpoint of appraisal grounded somewhere outside that range of possibilities afforded by the text's internal or authorized commentary. Theory thus enjoys a role that need not be understood as one of minimization or reduction, but rather of augmentation. Its promise, that is, involves supplementing the text, enriching its meaning by unearthing its tacit knowledge and its implicit or canceled opinions.¹¹⁴

If modern theory augments, supplements and enriches the readings of texts, regardless of their period, its use should not necessitate a rejection of the theories and attitudes that came before it. They are not mutually exclusive. Indeed the question is less that of *either* the modern *or* the premodern, theory *or* the text, and more one of the modern *and* the premodern, theory *and* the text. Released from the circularity of polemics, the subject of enquiry moves from a decision between the one or the other to an acceptance of both and how they can work in conjunction with each other. What this thesis pursues, therefore, is the possibility of an alliance, rather than a struggle, between modern titology and titling practice; it explores how each might inform, rather than confute, the other.

2.2.2 Negotiating a Frame of Reference

Of course, it might seem a little late in the day for this thesis to bemoan the underprivileged status of theory in premodern studies. Regardless of the disputes surrounding it, theory has been happening consistently in the area for some thirty years or so. The special issues of *New Literary History* in 1979 and 1984 and the publication of *Exemplaria* in 1989 attest to an early interest in theory, as do two essay collections published around this time: Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman's 1987 *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers* and Allen Frantzen's 1991 *Speaking Two Languages*.¹¹⁵ Having said this, recent conference programmes in the field, in which theory, of various modes, has figured large, would seem to

¹¹⁴ Strohm, *Premodern Text*, p. xii.

¹¹⁵ See *New Literary History* 10 (1979) and 16 (1984); *Exemplaria*, 1 (1989); Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman, ed., *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers* (New York and London: Cornell University Press, 1987); Frantzen, *Speaking Two Languages*.

suggest that its use is still open to debate. Indeed, a browse through the back catalogues of *Exemplaria* reveals that certain theoretical positions, namely feminism, psychoanalysis and postcolonial studies, have proved more amenable in the study of premodern texts than others.

Theory appears to have had less of an impact on disciplines that concentrate on the material forms of texts, namely epigraphy, papyrology, palaeography, codicology, philology, bibliography and so on. Indeed, theoretical and material forms of study are frequently considered apart from each other. In Emmerson's turn of the millennium evaluation of medieval studies, for example, he contrasts 'newer methodologies informed by contemporary theory' with the return 'to the original impulses motivating our discipline', that is, New Philology's 'interest in the study of the manuscript contexts of medieval literature'.¹¹⁶ Although they are mentioned within a sentence of each other, their discussion does not overlap; Emmerson treats them individually, and by evoking the opposition between new and old he further confirms them in their separateness.¹¹⁷

The apparent discordance between theoretical frames and the material study of texts is now starting to be queried. A session at the recent 2010 New Chaucer Society Congress asks 'What is the place of theory in manuscript studies?', seeking to address 'what the theoretical turn of medieval studies in the last few decades has to offer the more technical field of manuscript studies'.¹¹⁸ Though the panel's aim invites much-needed discussion, it consigns theory to the familiar position of justification: the questions posed, in the session's description at least, revolve round what a particular theory – gender and reception theories are two of the suggestions – has to offer the study of manuscripts; they do not consider what manuscript studies might offer theory or how the two may reinvigorate each other.

¹¹⁶ Emmerson, 'Medieval Studies', pp. 20, 23.

¹¹⁷ The contrast between theoretical innovation of contemporary (the new) and traditional analytical methods of medieval research (the old) is replicated throughout discussions in this area. For another instance, see Frantzen, 'Preface', in *Speaking Two Languages*, pp. ix-xv (p. ix).

¹¹⁸ See the session descriptions for the Seventeenth Biennial Congress of the New Chaucer Society in 2010. Available at: <http://artsci.wustl.edu/~chaucer/congress/congress2010call.php>.

Furthermore, the presentation of manuscript studies as ‘the more technical field’ enforces a hierarchical relation in which the specialism involved in the study of concrete texts takes precedence over what is characterized as the more abstract act of theorization. When faced with the solid, tangible evidence of the primary text, theoretical speculation is automatically relegated to a subsidiary role. The text is, after all, the point; anything else is just beside it.

It is this privileging of the primary text, a relatively recent phenomenon, which drives critics like Minnis in their repudiations of modern literary theory. According to Minnis, for example, it is only by searching a range of sources ‘provided by the glosses and commentaries on the authoritative Latin writers, or *auctores*’, that a specifically medieval theory of authorship can be recovered. In Minnis’s own words, he embarks on a recuperation of a ‘conceptual equipment’ that is ‘historically valid’.¹¹⁹ Neither Minnis nor surprisingly his respondees question the attainability of this retrieval. A modern terminology and framework may be said to lack historical validity, but replacing this with a premodern frame of reference is not an unproblematic solution. The very same features of uncertainty, openness and heterogeneity that lead critics to deem modern frameworks inappropriate for premodern texts also impact on any contemporaneous alternative that might be posited. Numerous questions can be levelled at the attempts to recapture the authentic: how does a scholar go about recouping the meaning(s) of a Middle English word? When a number of choices are available, how should he decide between them? What factors and influences inform that selection? The list could go on indefinitely.

It is open to discussion whether any attempt to recover past practices or attitudes can ever achieve historical legitimacy. As Kay argues in her critique of the New Philology movement: ‘[a]ny enumeration of “material facts” passes through interpretative grids, those of perception and language; that is why it is always possible for there to be disagreement over

¹¹⁹ Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, p. 1.

evidence.’¹²⁰ The medieval theory of authorship Minnis recovers, therefore, is mediated through his own knowledge, choices, and interpretations. In this way, the separation of the theoretical from the material is unfeasible. The implicitly hierarchical distinction that is made between the concrete and the abstract, between the real and the conceptual, allows the veneration of the material thing, now propagated so widely in academic circles: an act which serves the ultimate purpose of negating the loss of the past.¹²¹

If the idea of historical validity is itself dubious, there is no reason why the definitions, categories and terms made available by modern theoretical practice should not be used, if done so with caution and sensitivity, in the framing of titological discussion and analysis focussed on the premodern, or indeed any, period. Rather than being beside the point, they are, arguably, the point itself. The creation of new terms in a language normally indicates a lack, that there is some relation, effect, or thing that cannot be articulated in the available vocabulary. Many modern theoretical terms and phrases, often disparagingly referred to as jargon, are attempts to fill these gaps. Genette’s coining of the term paratext is one such term: it gives voice ‘to a heterogeneous group of practices and discourses of all kinds and dating from all periods [...] in the name of a common interest, or convergence of effects’ and, in so doing, allows and invites discussion of them.¹²² By giving expression to something previously inexpressible, these terms can be said to facilitate better understanding of features, concepts, their relations and their effects.

But it is also the case that these theories give little account to the past. It is not so much that the paratext would have meant nothing to premodern readers/listeners but rather that, as the previous chapter argues, such terms and theories rarely take aspects of premodern readings experiences into consideration. This begs the question of whether there is another

¹²⁰ Kay, ‘The New Philology’, p. 318.

¹²¹ For an extended discussion of how the fixation on material artefacts, factual evidence, and historical verity is motivated by the need to recoup the past and negate the loss of it, see Kay, ‘The New Philology’, pp. 318-21.

¹²² Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2.

term more suited to premodern textualities, and a search along these lines inevitably leads to the vocabularies of the past, as MacCormack asserts in the first epigraph to this section, and the attendant idea of historical validity. Genette's idea of the paratext, for instance, intersects in many respects with the Latin term *ordinatio*, particularly as it is now used by academics, that is, to designate the layout of the manuscript page.¹²³ This contemporary usage appears to stem from M. B. Parkes's well-known elaboration of the term in his 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book' in the late 1970s. Sixteen years later, in their critique of the modern revivification of these Latin terms 'Ordinatio and Compilatio Revisited', Rouse and Rouse criticize Parkes for moving 'ordinatio from the field of literature to that of codicology in order to refer to aspects of page layout and manuscript'.¹²⁴ Although his usage is, admittedly, indistinct at times, at no point in his essay does Parkes use the term *ordinatio* to designate the layout of the page; the terms and phrases he employs to these ends include 'layout', '*mise-en-page*', 'design of the page', 'presentation of the text', and 'packaging of the text'.¹²⁵ The individual elements of which the layout comprises are referred to as 'apparatus', 'devices' or 'bibliographical aids'.¹²⁶ As Parkes uses it, then, the concept of *ordinatio* appears to signify something closer to the internal ordering and division of a work, which concurs with the definition in the *Oxford*

¹²³ Some examples of interchangeable usage of the terms *ordinatio*, layout, paratext and *mise-en-page* can be found in Judith Tschann 'The Layout of Sir Thopas in the Ellesmere, Hengwrt, Cambridge Dd.4.24, and Cambridge Gg.4.27 Manuscripts', *Chaucer Review*, 20 (1985), 1-13 (p. 2); Andrew Taylor, 'The Legacy of Medieval Ordinatio', *Architectures, Ideologies, Materials of the Page* (2000). Available at: http://www.usask.ca/English/architectures/pages2/contents/medieval_ordinatio.html [accessed 27 February 2010]; Germaine Warkentin, 'Review of *Managing Readers: Printed Marginalia in English Renaissance Books* by William W. E. Slights', *Library*, 4 (2003), 73-74 (p. 73).

¹²⁴ Rouse and Rouse, 'Ordinatio and Compilatio Revisited', in *Ad Litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*, ed. Mark D. Jordan and Kent Emery, Jr. (London and Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp. 113-34 (p. 117).

¹²⁵ M. B. Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book', in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), pp. 115-41 (pp. 115, 116, 119, 120).

¹²⁶ Parkes, 'Ordinatio and Compilatio', pp. 115, 116, 118, 131, 133, 136, 138.

Latin Dictionary: ‘arrangement (of literary material)’.¹²⁷ In this respect, Rouse and Rouse are perhaps a shade too harsh in their criticisms.

More problematic is the intimation that the *mise-en-page* follows from, indeed is the result of, the structuring of a work. According to Parkes,

[t]he scholarly apparatus which we take for granted – analytical table of contents, text disposed into books, chapters, and paragraphs, and accompanied by footnotes and index – originated in the applications of the notions of *ordinatio* and *compilatio* by writers, scribes, and rubricators of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries.¹²⁸

Presentational features, for Parkes, arise out of the specificities of a particular *ordinatio*; they are not the *ordinatio* itself but the effects of it. Rouse and Rouse dispute this, however, arguing that

[w]hen one speaks of the “influence of the concepts” of *ordinatio* and *compilatio* on the development of the book, it implies – and many have assumed – that physical changes in the medieval book were somehow imported from above and outside, governed by theoretical considerations and scholarly discussion. Such an assumption is contrary to what is known about the circumstances of medieval book production. In the Middle Ages, authors seldom determine, and never long control, the physical appearance of their texts.¹²⁹

Distinguishing between the acts of literary creation and the physical layout of manuscripts, they go on to suggest that changes in book form are ‘a response to the demands of the audience, to the changing needs of those who use books.’¹³⁰ The medial figure of the scribe, who is arguably at once a reader and a creator, stands against Rouse and Rouse’s simple separation of creative and presentational acts.¹³¹ In this case, a qualification of Parkes’s argument is possibly more productive, that is, the physical appearance of a work results from the affects of the work’s *ordinatio* on the scribe, who is rendering that work for a particular

¹²⁷ See ‘*ordinatio*’, in *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed., P. G. W. Glare, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 1265. Also see the definition given by Rouse and Rouse, ‘*Ordinatio and Compilatio Revisited*’, pp. 117-18. It is in this sense (of literary structure) that Minnis uses *ordinatio*, see Minnis, *Medieval Theory*.

¹²⁸ Parkes, ‘*Ordinatio and Compilatio*’, p. 135.

¹²⁹ Rouse and Rouse, ‘*Ordinatio and Compilatio Revisited*’, p. 123.

¹³⁰ Rouse and Rouse, ‘*Ordinatio and Compilatio Revisited*’, p. 125.

¹³¹ Rouse and Rouse themselves note a number of ‘exceptions and qualifications’ to their distinction: see Rouse and Rouse, ‘*Ordinatio and Compilatio Revisited*’, pp. 124-25.

audience. Nevertheless, it quickly becomes apparent that neither the medieval concept of *ordinatio*, nor Parkes's redeployment of it, have much to do with the physical presentation of a literary composition.

The term *ordinatio*, as it is deployed in present scholarship, is a modern appropriation. In the opinion of Rouse and Rouse its redeployments can be potentially misleading but, as they concede, the introduction of *ordinatio* into the lexicon of manuscript studies has at least done 'a useful service in emphasizing physical presentation, in focusing on the development of scholarly apparatus in medieval manuscripts, and in drawing attention to the connection between how a text is perceived by its audience and the apparatus with which it is equipped.'¹³² It is perhaps for these reasons that, despite the pleas for 'a bit more clarity of thought and expression' in its contemporary use with which Rouse and Rouse close their essay, *ordinatio* continues to be used as a synonym for a text's *mise-en-page*, layout and paratext in academic circles today.¹³³ Rouse and Rouse themselves admit: '[i]t is not unheard of, and may even be useful, to create new Latin words in order to refer to medieval phenomena that the Middle Ages never bothered to name'.¹³⁴ But the modern redeployment of *ordinatio* cannot lay claim to historical validity, and, in this way, it is neither more nor less legitimate in discussions of premodern textualities than is the modern theoretical term paratext.

As Kay points out in the second epigraph to this section, the veneration of the past is not always enough. The automatic privileging of apparently premodern terms is not as uncomplicated as it at first seems. In view of its recent reification, it is difficult to know exactly what *ordinatio* encompasses but what it has in its favour is a focus that is specifically premodern. Then again, paratext is defined more fully and is, as a result, more accessible, and yet it grows out of modern-oriented theorizations and so seems to have limited applicability.

¹³² Rouse and Rouse, 'Ordinatio and Compilatio Revisited', p. 127.

¹³³ Rouse and Rouse, 'Ordinatio and Compilatio Revisited', p. 128.

¹³⁴ Rouse and Rouse, 'Ordinatio and Compilatio Revisited', p. 123.

In such cases, it is assumed that a choice must be made: either the modern or the premodern must be privileged. But a negotiation is possible. The concept of the *ordinatio* now appears to denote a group of features, whereas that of the paratext can designate this group but it also can be used to refer to the relations and the effects of these features. In this way, the more modern term may be used to productively supplement the premodern. Differences in their conceptualization mean that these terms cannot be used interchangeably; a concomitant usage, though, is not out of the question and, as the later chapters of this thesis will show, can be extremely enlightening.

In its current form, then, titology has limited applicability for premodern texts. Reconsideration in the light of the material evidence of premodern texts should lead to productive reformulation of the discipline, creating a theory (or theories) of the title or rather titling practice that is more sympathetic to premodern textualities, as well as a rejuvenated understanding of those textualities themselves. As the first step towards these dual goals, the thesis now moves to consider attitudes to titling as found in premodern literary theory and criticism itself, paying special attention to the ways in which the various practices are explained and discussed.

2.2.3 Taking Account of Premodern Literary Theory

Up until now, minimal attention has been paid to premodern views with regards to titling practice. A few studies focusing specifically on *incipit* forms of titling have been published, but these are usually considered in isolation from other kinds of practice.¹³⁵ Apart from the odd observation, usually noting the dissimilarities between previous and current forms, made during the course of an argument focused in some other area of premodernity – take Paul Zumthor’s statement that ‘[m]anuscripts dating from before the fourteenth century, which

¹³⁵ See Bloomfield, *Incipits of Latin Works*; D. Vance Smith, *The Book of the Incipit: Beginnings in the Fourteenth Century* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

provide an overall description of the following text, do so by means of a discursive expression, which can in no way fulfill the function of postmedieval titles', for example, or Bloomfield's claim that '[t]he medieval writer, copyist, or reader had a respect for a text which he did not have for a title', as another – comments regarding contemporaneous attitudes to titling are rare.¹³⁶ Considering that premodern literary theory has been mined for what it might reveal about early ideas of authorship by critics like Minnis and more recently Alexandra Gillespie, and given that the title is often closely linked to the author's name in both modern and premodern discussions, this critical oversight is puzzling.¹³⁷ It is all the more puzzling for the fact that discussions of titling, variously descriptive, reflective, explanatory and evaluative, are traceable to classical antiquity. That said, such expositions are few and far between, and those that do survive are, more often than not, extremely brief. It seems likely that it is the scarcity of the evidence, rather than its quality, that has discouraged, indeed inhibited, investigations in this area.

The rest of this final section considers contemporaneous attitudes to premodern titling practices as they are presented in certain branches of late antique and early medieval literary theory and criticism. The aim here, however, is not to retrieve an authentic, historically valid understanding of premodern ideas about, and methods of, titling. Instead, the objective is to give space to these early reflections, to explore the possibilities of their meanings, and to interrogate them, not only for what they might suggest about titling as it was then, but also for what they might reveal about titling as it is now. Over the last two decades, the breadth and diversity of premodern literary theory and criticism has been brought to the fore in

¹³⁶ Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Philip Bennett (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 48; Bloomfield, *Incipits of Latin Works*, p. 1.

¹³⁷ See Minnis, *Medieval Theory*; Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and Their Books, 1473-1557* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). For the inextricability of author and title in premodern discussions, see Stillinger, 'The Place of the Title'. The links between title and author are implied throughout those titological studies which concentrate on modern titles.

studies by Minnis, James J. Murphy and Rita Copeland, among others.¹³⁸ Faced with such a large area, this thesis limits its consideration to those treatises which overtly address the practice of titling.

Whether they have been lost or whether they were just never produced, no manuals or tracts dedicated solely to the subject of the text's *mise-en-page*, or indeed to any paratextual item or grouping of items, are extant from this period. With regard to poetry (on which the later chapters of this study concentrate), Murphy points out that the ancient world while 'so productive of *artes rhetoricae*' produced 'very few prescriptive documents in the realm of imaginative literature.'¹³⁹ He goes on: 'ancient Greek poetry proceeded for the most part without accruing any residual set of principles or rules to be transmitted in formal systems.'¹⁴⁰ Even when a more consistent form of prescriptive poetics emerges in the Middle Ages, into which the ancient traditions (particularly those of Aristotle and Cicero) have been assimilated, the text's layout is not one of its concerns. Although these compositional guides could cover topics as seemingly relevant as 'ordering the material' (which might involve subdivisions and possibly subheadings), as does Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova* (c.1210), or 'the art of beginning' (which increasingly involved *incipit* titling forms), as in John of Garland's *Parisiana poetria* (c.1240), titling acts are not discussed.¹⁴¹ From this, it might be inferred that titling (and the general layout of texts) constituted an incidental factor in the

¹³⁸ For a thorough overview of the area, see Rita Copeland, 'Medieval Theory and Criticism', in *Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth and Imre Szeman, 2nd edn. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 645-52. Other notable studies include: James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (London and Los Angeles: University of California, 1974); Minnis, A. B. Scott and David Wallace, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c.1100-c.1375* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988); Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350-1100* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹³⁹ Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁰ Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 27.

¹⁴¹ Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, in *The 'Poetria Nova' of Geoffrey of Vinsauf*, trans. Margaret F. Nims (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1967), pp. 18-23; John of Garland, *Parisiana poetria*, in *The 'Parisiana Poetria' of John of Garland*, ed. and trans. Traugott Lawler (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 3.

composition of premodern texts or that they are at least considered as separate from each other at this time.

Yet theory does not always represent practice. At the end of what is now distinguished as the ‘Introductory Summary’ to his treatise, John of Garland presents his own *titulus* thus:

[t]he final question is the title; here it is: “Here begins the *Parisiana Poetria* of Master John of Garland, the Englishman, on the Art of Prose, Quantitative Verse, and Rhymed Syllabic Verse.”¹⁴²

While he does not theorize titling as part of the writing process, John of Garland not only cites his own selection, he also explains it: ‘[t]he title is taken from the first word of the book’.¹⁴³ It might be, then, that premodern (para)textual features – *incipits*, *explicits*, illuminated initials, miniatures, paraphs – were, as Irvine implies in *The Making of Textual Culture*, more a matter of established practice.¹⁴⁴ Irvine argues that ‘[t]he physical arrangement of texts in a grammatical compilation and the layout of the pages were encoded in specific ways known to every user of the book’.¹⁴⁵ Though Irvine’s comments apply to manuscripts associated with *grammatica* in the early Middle Ages, when expanded to incorporate the generality of premodern manuscripts, they might go some way towards explaining the absence of literary theory on (and particularly of prescriptive guides to) the physical appearance of manuscript texts.

Titling is, however, discussed elsewhere in the criticism and theory of premodern literature. The commentary tradition, in particular, registers a sustained interest in the titling of individual works as well as in titling practices more generally. Introducing their joint project, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c.1100-c.1375*, Minnis, Scott and David Wallace characterize the tradition as having ‘a lot to say about a far wider range of literary

¹⁴² John of Garland, *Parisiana poetria*, p. 3.

¹⁴³ John of Garland, *Parisiana poetria*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁴ Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture*, pp. 371-93.

¹⁴⁵ Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture*, p. 372.

matters than those which fall within the terms of reference of the pragmatic and prescriptive “arts”, and this likely explains why early forms of titological consideration find a place within it.¹⁴⁶

As early as the fourth century, grammarians Aelius Donatus and Servius choose to include the *titulus* in their academic prologues (to Virgil’s *Eclogues* and the *Aeneid*, respectively) as a site worthy of explication. Though exactly what the word *titulus* signifies in these situations is open to question.¹⁴⁷ As if to illustrate this uncertainty, Minnis, in his abridgement of Remigius of Auxerre’s commentary on the *Disticha Catonis*, groups the words *titulus*, *inscriptio* and *nomen* together under his first heading, implying that each can be used to signify ‘[t]he title of the work’.¹⁴⁸ Subtleties in meaning – *nomen* usually exclusively denotes a name, *inscriptio* seems to signify a longer piece of writing often supplying a variety of information, *titulus* has a wider ambit of meaning, but generally refers to an inscription fulfilling a descriptive or identificatory purpose (representing something more akin to a label perhaps) – separate these words; therefore, the synonymy that Minnis evokes actually serves to emphasize the looseness of conception of the *titulus*, the expansiveness in terms of what it could do or mean, at this time.¹⁴⁹ This flexibility is played out in the later more descriptive or evaluative expositions of the commentary tradition.

At first glance, the later commentaries appear to betray a decidedly modern idea of the title. In the early twelfth century, in his *Dialogus super auctores*, Conrad of Hirsau draws on the convention of etymological explication in order to describe how the *titulus* should function: ‘[t]he title (*titulus*) is derived from a certain Titan and is so called for reasons of

¹⁴⁶ Minnis, Scott and Wallace, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁷ Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁴⁸ Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, pp. 19.

¹⁴⁹ See the definitions for *inscriptio*, *nomen*, and *titulus* in Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, pp. 921, 1185-86, 1944-45.

similarity. It is a brief indication of the work to follow.¹⁵⁰ In its illuminating capacity, Conrad's description of the *titulus*, which draws on Servius who believes that 'the term *titulus* [...] comes from Titan, that is, the sun', seems to correspond with the contemporary notion of the title as an interpretive key to the content of the text; his immediate elaboration, where he declares that '[t]he difference between a prologue and a title is that the title briefly indicates the author and his subject matter', casts the previous assertion in a slightly different light.¹⁵¹ The *titulus* here, and elsewhere, appears to be something other (indeed something more) than the 'title' to which it is regularly translated. It is not so much the name of the work as a description of its circumstances.

Similar fluidity in the use of the word *titulus* is evident in the later commentaries of Arnulf of Orleans, Ralph of Longchamps, Dante Alighieri, Guido de Pisa, Pietro Alighieri and Giovanni Boccaccio.¹⁵² Any statement of the *titulus*, normally expressed as 'the title is as follows' or 'the title of the book is', is followed by what now would be identified as an *incipit* form of titling. These *incipit*-headings usually open with the declaration 'here begins' which is then succeeded by a variety of information, including the author's name, a dedication, a genre indication, a synopsis, an indication of a subdivision, a location, and so on. Ralph of Longchamps' thirteenth-century exposition of Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus* is exemplary in this respect, as he asserts: '[t]he title is as follows: *Here begins the Anticlaudianus of Alan, concerning the Antirufinus*. Three things are denoted in this title: the author of the work, what the author has done in the work, and the subject-matter of the work.'¹⁵³ By noting that it can be constituted variously, Ralph gives explicit voice to the expansiveness of the *titulus* in

¹⁵⁰ Conrad of Hirsau, 'Dialogue of Authors: Extracts', in Minnis, Scott and Wallace, *Medieval Literary Theory*, pp. 39-64 (p. 43).

¹⁵¹ Minnis, Scott and Wallace, *Medieval Literary Theory*, pp. 19, 43.

¹⁵² For these references, see the extracts in Minnis, Scott and Wallace, *Medieval Literary Theory*, pp. 155, 160, 460, 473-74, 480, 506-7.

¹⁵³ Ralph of Longchamps, 'Commentary on Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus*: Exposition of the Prologue', Minnis, Scott and Wallace, *Medieval Literary Theory*, pp. 158-64 (p. 160).

premodernity.¹⁵⁴ In this broadness, the *titulus* stands at odds with the title, as it is now understood: that is, as a normally concise, discrete, descriptive act of naming. Much can be masked or lost, as the following chapters demonstrate, when this modern concept is imposed, without consideration, on premodern practices.

A study like this, which takes account of premodern practices of titling, finds it increasingly difficult to accept the concept of the title, as promulgated by titologists and general readers alike, as anything other than a modern, and at times obstructive, construction. The route this thesis must subsequently follow is summarized cogently at the beginning of Zumthor's *Towards a Medieval Poetics*:

[s]ince we cannot avoid projecting our history and culture into it, in order, as it were, to make it our own, we should at least avoid the pitfall of applying simplifying analogies to the text, or of explaining it by reference to our own myths.¹⁵⁵

In the light of this, it is perhaps as well for the study of premodern titling practice to abandon or at the very least distance itself from modern conceptions of the title; just how to achieve this is this project that the rest of the thesis undertakes.

Premodern discussions of titling, though scarce, confute the critical trend that sees titology as a recent movement. Indeed, there is much to be gained from a consideration of how a particular period viewed its own activities and practices, but this contemplation must be accompanied by the awareness that what remains is partial, in both its fragmented and biased senses, and is, therefore, far from representative. For example, the models for and attitudes to titling set out by early literary theory must be weighed against the lack of uniformity and consistency in actual application. More often than not, practices of titling as they are found in premodern texts bear only a slight resemblance to their conceptualizations in contemporaneous scholarly discussions and theories. The next chapter tries to address the gap that so often lies between theory and practice by opening the meanings of the word title

¹⁵⁴ A fuller account of early titling practices can be found in the next chapter ('Meaning and Early Practices').

¹⁵⁵ Zumthor, *Medieval Poetics*, p. 4.

(and its various roots) up to more thorough consideration than has been attempted thus far and by looking in more detail at practices of titling as they were employed in some of the earliest surviving texts of premodernity.

3 Early Titling: Meanings, Uses and Practices

The word *title* is used fairly indiscriminately throughout academic discourse: its applicability in all contexts is seldom questioned. Some scholars do draw attention to the differences between modern and premodern practices, noticing as John Mulvihill does that '[t]he function and source of [early] titles make them quite different from modern thematic titles', but yet they still, like Mulvihill, resort to the term title with all its many attendant preconceptions and expectations during the course of their discussions.¹ But as the previous chapter's contrasts between modern and premodern conceptualizations of titles illustrate titling practice as it was then is by no means the same as it is now, and a good deal is lost by treating it as such.

It is time to do for the title what A. J. Minnis and Alexandra Gillespie have done for its close associate the author: it is time to take account of the title's historical development.² A thorough exploration of the prehistory of the title, an account of the distinct meanings, functions and forms of premodern titling practice, is long overdue. In an effort to move beyond the limits of modern ideas of the title, this chapter first interrogates the premodern meanings and uses of the word *title* and then moves to explore some of the earliest practices of titling and specifically their forms and functions. To date, these particular areas of enquiry have been explored only tentatively by critics in the field of title studies. For this thesis, however, examinations of the premodern meanings, uses, functions, and forms of titling practice are seen to be crucial to a more sympathetic understanding of the title's prehistory.³

¹ John Mulvihill, 'For Public Consumption: The Origin of Titling the Short Poem', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 97 (1998), 190-205 (p. 190).

² See A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn. (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1988); Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and Their Books, 1473-1557* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³ As the previous chapter ('Modern Titology and Its Premodern Gap') points out there are a number of titological studies of premodern practices; however, many of these studies treat the disparate practices of premodernity as though they are modern titles and so differ, in this respect, from the current thesis. To my knowledge, there are no extensive considerations of the premodern meanings of title extant in the field.

3.1 Meanings and Uses

I never demand of philology, and even less of what others call etymology, the guarantee of a concept.

(Jacques Derrida)⁴

3.1.1 Etymologies

The chapter begins with a survey of the various senses and meanings of the noun *title* in the premodern period. In particular, it considers the etymologies traced both in titology and in etymological dictionaries, the definitions provided by standard dictionaries, alongside a range of information gathered from the texts themselves as well as from other relevant databases and resources. This etymology does not, however, attempt to locate the true sense of *title*; its pursuit is not some etymological fallacy whereby the recovery of the original or earliest meanings of a word provides the key to its real meaning. Its goal is much less positivist. Instead it tries to open up the possibilities of meaning, and meanings lost, that have been minimized or excluded elsewhere. If there is any recovery at all, it is in the sense that these earlier meanings force reconsideration of contemporary uses and assumptions, and, in this respect, a loss is made good.

Very few titological studies discuss the semantics of *title*. Fewer still consider its semantic variance over time. Jacques Derrida, Anne Ferry, John Mulvihill, Hazard Adams and Richard Sharpe are among a small number of critics who attempt to establish their own etymologies for *title*. Though their subject is the same, these accounts vary considerably, not only in terms of their length and detail, but also in terms of the conclusions they draw. At the beginning of ‘Titles, Titling, and Entitlement To’, Adams offers the most comprehensive consideration of *title*’s historical meanings to date. He opens, as do all the other accounts, with *title*’s Latin roots: ‘[i]t comes into English from the Latin *titulus*, and when it does so it

⁴ Jacques Derrida, ‘Title (To Be Specified)’, *SubStance*, 10 (1981), 5-22 (p. 20).

expands its meanings.’⁵ After this Adams covers ground quickly, moving from the *titulus*, which he claims ‘meant inscription, label, notice, title of honor, fame, pretext’ (but not, incidentally, the name of the book, a point to which this thesis returns below), through reflections on various other contiguous Latin words, and arriving at the modern word *title* in a matter of sentences. Adams finishes his account with a lengthy (but strangely unanalysed) list of the title’s ‘historical uses’, which is lifted from the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*.⁶ Just what Adams hopes to achieve with his etymology is never quite clear. While the range of title’s significations becomes evident, it is the gaps in the account – the most obvious of which, in an etymology of the English word *title*, is the absence of Old or Middle English senses or uses of *title* – that are most noticeable. The path Adams navigates then is perhaps slightly haphazard in its apparent inclusiveness.

Adams’s treatment of *title*’s semantic development contrasts sharply in terms of scope with those of Sharpe, Mulvihill and Ferry who provide much shorter etymologies focused on the literary meanings of the word. After a substantial description of the *titulus*, which is after all the topic of his book, Sharpe states: ‘[o]ut of the Latin word *titulus* the narrower modern usage “title” developed; the meaning of *titulus* is closer to the modern title-page’.⁷ Mulvihill, on the other hand, suggests that ‘[t]he etymology of the title suggests something more like a label than an integral part: the *titulus* was a tag glued to the outside of a papyrus roll, allowing the works to be identified easily as they lay or stood in containers.’⁸ Although their analyses are different, Sharpe and Mulvihill concur in their distinction between the modern and premodern meanings of *title*. Both Mulvihill and Sharpe deal exclusively with the

⁵ Hazard Adams, ‘Titles, Titling, and Entitlement To’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 46 (1987), 7-21 (p. 8).

⁶ Adams, ‘Titles’, p. 8. Also see ‘title, n.’, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), XVIII. 155-157 (p. 155).

⁷ Richard Sharpe, *Titulus: Identifying Medieval Latin Texts. An Evidence-Based Approach* (Brepols: Turnhout, 2003), p. 30.

⁸ Mulvihill, ‘For Public Consumption’, p. 190.

meanings of *title* in its literary context, and it is likely this specificity of focus that allows their accounts to achieve the clarity of purpose that otherwise eludes Adams.

That said, the restricted scope of these etymologies can have the effect of oversimplifying the semantic development of *title*. Ferry's equally brief history is similar in this respect. 'The first definition given for the noun *title* (from the Latin *titulus*) in the earliest dictionaries of English', she claims, 'makes it synonymous with inscription, written words, and it will be thought of in that association here.'⁹ Exactly which dictionaries Ferry is referring to here, and how early they are, is not apparent, but what is clear is that the purpose of this definition is to provide support (as is often the case with those dictionary definitions that appear in criticism) for Ferry's argument. In the titological accounts of Ferry, Mulvihill, Sharpe and Adams, etymology is the evidence: they invoke the authority of word history to provide indubitable support for their arguments.

Derrida's approach to etymologizing in his essay 'Title (To Be Specified)' stands at odds with those of the titological accounts surveyed thus far. From the very outset, the value of etymology is placed in doubt. Before outlining the etymological roots of *title*, a procedure on which 'some' rely (the use of the English adjective here, which translates as *certain* in Derrida's French, seems to imply that he does not), Derrida rather paradoxically asserts that he sets no store by either philology or etymology.¹⁰ In fact, what Derrida goes on to detail is not a single line of origin for *title* but an abundance of probable lines, namely 'the Latin *titulus*', 'the Greek *tiō*', and 'the Sanscrit [*sic.*] root *ti*'.¹¹ By sketching multiple semantic roots for *title* Derrida underscores the impossibility of establishing the origin of meaning and, by extension, the original meaning for a word. He also raises methodological questions in respect of etymology. For instance, he links *title* to words that have some phonological similarity but

⁹ Anne Ferry, *The Title to the Poem* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 8.

¹⁰ Derrida, 'Title', p. 20. For the French original, see Jacques Derrida, 'Titre à préciser', in *Parages* (Paris: Galilee, 2003), pp. 219-47 (and for this quotation specifically, see p. 244).

¹¹ Derrida, 'Title', p. 20.

are at a distance in terms of their meanings: *tiô* means ‘to esteem, evaluate, honor, valorize’, while *ti* means ‘to remark, to research, to recognize, to pursue, to venerate, to honor etc.’¹² The gulf of meaning between Derrida’s roots, *ti* and *tiô*, and the English word *title* begs the question of how far back any word’s history can and should be traced. In presenting a choice of beginnings – Greek, Latin or Sanskrit – each of which, Derrida appears to suggest, offering an equally plausible and legitimate etymological beginning or route for *title*, and each with an etymology of its own, Derrida teasingly indicates that the preference for one or the other etymological path, and the degree to which they are pursued, ultimately lies with the individual etymologist.

As if to prove Derrida’s point, whereas the critical etymologies of *title* draw on a common pool of resources – mostly dictionaries, usually of the historical variety – the accounts can diverge dramatically. Where Adams can confidently assert – and it must be noted, here, that he provides no supporting evidence – that *titulus* ‘was not used with books’ in the Latin language, Sharpe can devote an entire book-length study, *Titulus: Identifying Medieval Latin Texts*, to the development of the *titulus* in its specifically literary, and particularly pragmatic, context.¹³

Turning to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary (OLD)* for clarification here only complicates the picture further as line seven of Ovid’s *Tristia* (c. 9 AD), ‘*nec titulus minio, nec cedro charta notetur*’, is cited as evidence that *titulus* could refer to ‘the title, heading (of a book, chapter, etc)’.¹⁴ Ovid’s lines appear to refer to the practice of rubricating headings within manuscripts, and, when considered in the context of the first elegy in which they appear – an envoy-like opening which stipulates a plain, unornamented appearance for the *Tristia* so that

¹² Derrida, ‘Title’, p. 20

¹³ Adams, ‘Titles’, p. 8.

¹⁴ See ‘titulus¹’, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 1944-45 (p. 1945). For the elegy itself, with accompanying English translation, see Ovid, *Tristia: Ex Ponto*, ed. and trans. Arthur Leslie Wheeler (London: Heineman, 1965), I. I. 7. Wheeler’s translation of this line is as follows: ‘your title shall not be tinged with vermilion nor your paper with oil of cedar’.

it reflects the poem's sombre subject-matter – the word *titulus*, in its ancient setting, can be seen to bear at least some resemblance to contemporary understandings of the title as a presentational device.

It is neither necessary nor helpful to spend time here deliberating which of these accounts, whether Adams's, Sharpe's or the *OLD*'s, is most correct. Indeed, it is more than likely that the meaning of *titulus*, in its earliest uses, lies somewhere between all three. On the one hand, Sharpe's and the *OLD*'s linking of the *titulus* with the modern concept of the literary title seems appropriate. Both *titulus* and title can fulfil referential and designative functions. Yet *tituli* are not exactly the same as modern literary titles; as the previous chapter shows, they are constituted quite differently from titles, and their purpose appears to be predominantly pragmatic and not, as is the case with many modern titles, primarily thematic. Indeed, those functions such as advertising, tempting, legitimizing, indicating the beginning, the themes, the genres, or the audiences, which are now so closely associated with contemporary titles, have yet to develop. Thus Sharpe's equation of the *titulus* with the modern title-page is rendered untenable. It might be more constructive to view *tituli* as early forms of titling practice, representing just one of the title's many antecedental forms. In this way, Adams's more contentious statement that *tituli* were not used with books can also be accommodated because they do not appear to have been used with books in the same way, in material terms at least, that titles are.

When considered in conjunction, the existing etymological studies of *title* demonstrate that a single etymological line of enquiry is insufficient. Rather than trying to trace a continuous, linear, coherent etymology, then, this chapter maps out a number of etymologies, some of which are concurrent, some successive, and among which a few are conflicting, while some are more congruent. Following Derrida, it does not seek 'the

guarantee of a concept' in etymology; what it does seek, however, are the possibilities of that concept within multiple etymologies.¹⁵

3.1.2 Dictionaries

Etymological accounts of the word *title* are in the minority. Those etymologies for *title* that do exist illustrate that its meanings are not always clear: at times they are particularly difficult to unpick; at others, they remain opaque. It is unsurprising, then, that academics tend to shun these uncertain stages either by writing round them or by silencing them altogether. Most titological criticism, therefore, tends to rely on a generalized conception of *title*. A familiarity with the word *title*, according to the critics, is endemic in contemporary societies. 'The title, as everyone knows, is the "name" of a book', says Gérard Genette, mid-way through his seminal discussion of titles.¹⁶ At the beginning of a similarly focussed article, a few years previous to Genette, John Fisher decides that it is safe to 'assume that we all have some rough idea of what "title" is supposed to mean: the large letters on the spine of a book, the words on the center of the first of a musical score, or the little phrase on the museum wall to the right of the painting'.¹⁷ The tenuity of this universal understanding of *title* is evident in that both Fisher and Genette, despite their declarations to the contrary, still find it is necessary to define what they mean by the word.

Elsewhere in the criticism, however, definitions are optional. The evasion here is subtle; if everyone knows what *title* means then there is no need for the critic to interrogate (or even explain) it, and modern definitions of *title*, drawn from current synchronic dictionaries, are allowed to stand as universal. It comes as no surprise to find that 'the most accurate and up-to-date description of the language available', the *Oxford Dictionary of*

¹⁵ Derrida, 'Title', p. 20.

¹⁶ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 79.

¹⁷ John Fisher, 'Entitling', *Critical Inquiry*, 11 (1984), 286-98 (p. 286).

English, concurs with Genette and Fisher as it lists, ‘the name of a book, composition, or other artistic work’, as the primary contemporary sense for *title*.¹⁸ As a result of the widespread internalization of the modern title and its significations, many titological studies work from the premise that *title* signifies similarly, if not identically, over the course of history, with the subsequent implication, absurd when rendered this way, that it meant the same thing to Ovid, Bede, the *Beowulf*-poet, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Dickens, and Genette.¹⁹ Certainly, Ovid and Bede would not have had recourse to the word *title*; *titulus* would have been the closest Latin word, and, as the earlier discussions demonstrate, the two terms do not exactly correlate. Furthermore, once *title* gains currency in English during the fourteenth century its meanings are at once manifold and continuously shifting. Such a generalized conception then is extremely problematic.

In those titological studies that do define the word *title* there is a tendency to accept, automatically and tacitly, the definitions provided by present day dictionaries.²⁰ The authority of the dictionary seems indisputable: it is used in educational establishments and at work, and is cited in law courts and during parliament. It is a reference book and, in this capacity, it frequently assumes the status of primary source, supplying its readers with evidence, facts, history; as lexicographer Jonathon Green points out, it is widely characterized as ‘factual, accurate, disinterested’.²¹ ‘The assumption [...] is’, as Howard Jackson observes, ‘that “the dictionary” is a single text, perhaps in different versions, rather like the Bible.’²² But there are many dictionaries of different types, serving different purposes, and designed for different users; therefore, the definitions they offer are seldom the same.

¹⁸ See ‘title, n.’, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, 2nd edn. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. viii, 1851.

¹⁹ Articles that promote this assumption include: Tim Whitmarsh, ‘The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre’, *American Journal of Philology*, 126 (2005), 587-611.

²⁰ The undisputed authority of the dictionary is apparent throughout English literary studies.

²¹ Jonathon Green, *Chasing the Sun: Dictionary-Makers and the Dictionaries They Made* (London: Pimlico, 1996), p. 23.

²² Howard Jackson, *Lexicography: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 21.

Etymological dictionaries are a case in point. It is to be expected that different critics, motivated by different objectives and drawing on different skills and resources, will navigate different etymological routes; to find that similar variation is also true of etymological dictionaries, for which the history of the meaning of words is a shared goal, is more surprising. In spite of their common purpose, the word histories traced for *title* by these dictionaries diverge as much, if not more, than the critical etymologies considered above. Indeed, each dictionary offers a different, and usually partial, etymology. To consider two examples from the last fifty years, C. T. Onions's *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* proves more systematic than most in that it lists the senses of specific words chronologically; it does not, however, always support this arrangement with dates. So while 'inscription or legend' constitutes the first sense for *title*, it is not until the second sense, 'ground of right or claim', that a date, the thirteenth century, is provided.²³

Cassell's Dictionary of Word Histories, a more discursive venture by Adrian Room, reveals an alternative, but even less satisfying, account. Room's volume only considers the development of the current sense of *title*: 'an inscription serving as a name or designation, esp[ecially] of a book, chapter, poem, etc.'²⁴ The first record of this meaning, Room's claims, is 'pre-1200'; however, this directly conflicts with Onions's chronological ordering which locates the first use of *title* to signify a 'descriptive appellation' somewhere between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries.²⁵ The difficulties involved in establishing a direct etymological line of descent, implied in Derrida's alternative etymologies, are patent here. The format of dictionaries might encourage a genealogical interpretation of meaning, or rather an interpretation that searches for a single, progressive line of semantic development, but it does not support it. As a reference tool, dictionaries are designed to be brief, concise,

²³ See 'title', in *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. C. T. Onions, G. W. S. Friedrichsen and R. W. Burchfield (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), p. 927.

²⁴ See 'title', in *Cassell's Dictionary of Word Histories*, ed. Adrian Room (London: Cassell, 2000), p. 633.

²⁵ Room, *Word Histories*, p. 633; Onions, Friedrichsen and Burchfield, *English Etymology*, p. 927.

accessible, and this is often at the expense of details, pluralities, and complexities; when consulting such resources readers must be aware that a simplified trajectory is always favoured.

To date, the authority of the dictionary has held sway in the field of titology. It seems that the general consensus among titologists and etymologists (excepting Derrida) is that the modern English noun *title* derives directly and ultimately from the Latin *titulus*. Those with positivist inclinations could take the accord between so many separate areas of enquiry to mean that scholars have hit upon an etymological truth: the origin of the word *title*'s meaning. What is more likely, however, is that these investigations, however different, have utilized the same kinds of resource, basing their accounts on the definitions that the current historical (and in some instances various period-specific) dictionaries provide. Indeed, in the *OED*, the most prominent historical dictionary, the entry for *title* is prefaced by a short etymology, stating that it derives from the 'L[atin] *titulus* superscription, *title*'.²⁶ The correlation between this description and those offered in the etymologies (both titological and philological) examined above is unmistakable. But, as the contradictory statements of Adams and Sharpe discussed above illustrate, just what *titulus* means is itself subject to extensive debate.

The *OLD* gives *titulus* seven main senses. Chronologically, *titulus* can signify: 'a flat piece of wood, stone, or other material, inscribed with a notice, identification, or other information' or 'a commemorative tablet, on which details of a person's career, etc., are inscribed'; 'an inscription (dist[inct] fr[om] the material on which it is inscribed)' or 'a commemorative inscription'; 'the title, heading (of a book, chapter, etc)' or 'a part of a book comprised under one heading, chapter'; 'an identifying word or phrase, name, title, inscription' or 'a personal title'; 'a name or description applied to a thing in order to mask its

²⁶ Simpson and Weiner, *OED*, XVIII. 155.

real nature’ or ‘an ostensible motive, pretext’; ‘a head under which an action, procedure, etc., is sanctioned’; ‘claim to glory, or fame, distinction’, ‘the distinction, honour (arising from, consisting in)’ or ‘a name, reputation (for)’.²⁷ The breadth of the term is immediately apparent; the pervasive uncertainty that surrounds this entry is less obvious. Attempts to establish a loose etymology for *titulus*, especially with regards to its earliest uses and meanings, are complicated by the difficulties involved in dating with any precision and certainty the sources, including epigraphical inscriptions, manuscripts rolls and early codices. Indeed, much of the evidence is partial or has been lost altogether, which means that any timeline is complicated by hypothetical archetypes and later, possibly derivative copies. *Titulus* is, according to etymologist Ernest Klein, ‘of uncertain origin’, and, though Derrida suggests alternative Greek and Sanskrit roots for the word, the choice involved suggests that his view is essentially the same.²⁸

Uncertainty in this area is inescapable. Yet considerations of the meanings of *titulus* are not necessarily futile. If plurality and fluidity are allowed to take the place of singularity and certainty, if attempts to trace direct lines of etymological descent are replaced with matrices of meaning, then the senses of *titulus* (and its later off-shoot *title*) can be better elucidated and the previous circularity avoided. The *OLD*’s senses for *titulus* can be loosely grouped into three clusters: those where the *titulus* signifies a description/inscription of some sort (descriptive), where it designates or names in some way (designative), or where it signals some kind of right or claim (claimative). The groups themselves are not important here. Indeed the senses can be divided, and these divisions described, in ways other than have been chosen for this thesis, and a number of the *OLD*’s senses (listed above) fall into more than one grouping. Rather, the importance lies with the relations of meaning and developments of these connections (both synchronic and diachronic) that such groupings bring to light. What

²⁷ Glare, *OLD*, pp. 1944-45.

²⁸ See ‘title’, in *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, ed. Ernest Klein (London and New York: Elsevier, 1967), II. 1622.

follows is an attempt to map the multiple interconnections and layering of meanings, the etymologies, for *title*, as it comes to be used in the English language during the premodern period.

The Latin *titulus* eventually filters into the vernacular languages, as *title* in Old French and *titul* in Old English. Bosworth and Toller's *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* and John R. Clark Hall's *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* both list 'a title, superscription' as the definition for *titul*, suggesting an early equivalence with Latin *titulus* in those senses.²⁹ Given that the first known use of *titul* in English occurs in the tenth-century Old English interlinear translation of *St Mark's Gospel* in the Lindisfarne Gospels (London, British Library, Cotton Nero D. iv), where *titulus* and *titul* refer to the inscription on Christ's cross, that semantic connection seems accurate.³⁰

Apart from this early instance of Latin to English translation, the appearances of the English word *titul* in the Anglo-Saxon period and throughout the early Middle Ages are rare.³¹ From around the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century the English word becomes more common, appearing in various spellings: *titel*, *titil*, *titille*, *titule*, *titulle*, and *tetil*.³² The earliest uses of the Middle English *title* reveal that it carries with it some, but not all, of the meanings of its Latin root. For example, according to the first sense of the *Middle English Dictionary* (*MED*), *title* can signify 'an inscription', as did *titulus*, but

²⁹ See 'titul', in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 989; see 'titul', in *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. John R. Clark Hall, 4th edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 342.

³⁰ Simpson and Weiner, *OED*, XVIII. 155. The *OED* quotes from the tenth-century manuscript of the *Lindisfarne Gospels* in this context. *Titulus* is also the word used in the Latin Vulgate Bible.

³¹ All the dictionaries surveyed in this thesis agree on this point. Additionally, a simple search of the *Old English Corpus* online database returns only one match for the word *titul*: see *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, ed. Antonette diPaolo Healey (2009). Available at: <http://www.doe.utoronto.ca/pub/webcorpus.html> [accessed 25 March 2010].

³² See 'title', in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Robert E. Lewis (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), T. 753-55 (p. 753). It seems likely that Middle English *title* (and its variants) came from Old English *titul* (and its variants) but there is also a possibility that it filtered into the English language as a French loan-word. According to Frédéric Godefroy, the Old French word *title* also derives from the Latin *titulus* and its earliest use is in the twelfth century: see Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française, et de tous ses dialectes du IXe au XVe siècle* (Paris: Bouillon, 1892), VII. 730-1; Godefroy, *Dictionnaire: Complément* (Paris, Bouillon, 1902), X. 772-3.

it appears that the Middle English word conflates the material and figurative senses of inscription (probably because the epigraphic medium was outmoded by this time) which are distinct in the Latin root.³³ While there is a good deal of continuity between the meanings of *titulus* and Middle English *title*, modifications of meaning develop as *title* passes into, and starts to reflect, the different cultural contexts of medieval England.

As the word *title* begins to be deployed in new and diverse contexts across the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, its meanings proliferate and, increasingly, the English word *title* begins to acquire its own augmented set of meanings. That is to say, the Middle English *title* develops a succession of new significations which stem from, but are no longer direct replications of, the meanings of its Latin source. The second part of the *MED*'s first sense for *title* suggests that it may refer to 'a small mark or stroke made with a pen point', 'the name of the symbol for the Latin word *est*', or, consequently, 'the smallest part of something'.³⁴ Each of these senses represents a fresh use of *title*: specifically Middle English uses which distance it from the meanings of its Latin derivation. But this distance is not entirely estranging: traces of the semantic range of *titulus*, particularly the descriptive and designative groupings of meanings mentioned above and the subsequent developments and interconnections of these are also discernible in this expansion of *title*'s range of meanings.

The same combination of semantic continuation and innovation can also be seen in the *MED*'s other senses for *title*. Senses five and six, for example, seem to extend during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries from the claimative senses of *titulus*: '[t]he grounds or basis for the assertion of a legal claim', 'the assertion of claim or right', or an 'authorization, warrant'; and '[a] legal right to the possession of land or immovable property, a legal claim', or 'a title deed, the evidence of a right to property'.³⁵ But the opening out of this particular semantic strand of *title* is driven by the needs of the society that produces it. The growth of

³³ Lewis, *MED*, T. 753.

³⁴ Lewis, *MED*, T. 754.

³⁵ Lewis, *MED*, T. 755.

legal consciousness in English society over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which Anthony Musson describes in his *Medieval Law in Context*, accounts for the increase in legal senses and uses of *title* in Middle English.³⁶ *Title*'s semantic development is the result of complex interactions between the meanings of the past and the contexts of the present. Indeed, if meanings develop both successively and simultaneously, then a comprehensive unilinear etymology is not only a fruitless goal but also, ultimately, an unattainable one. In studies or accounts of semantic change it is perhaps more productive to look for matrices rather than genealogies of meaning.

The *MED*'s advantage in such an investigation is that it recognizes the multilineality of meaning.³⁷ In recognition of the multiple crossovers, conjunctions and interrelations, it organizes the major senses of words (and so the nine main senses it gives for *title*): 'according to a "logical" rather than historical sequence, unless the chronology of the quotations clearly supports a historical sequence (which is rare).'³⁸ What *MED* editors mean by 'logic' and 'historical sequence' in this context is not immediately clear. Are the senses all grouped into subsets of legal, technical, or general usage or are they arranged according to the frequency of use? Is the ordering sometimes chronological? Or are they grouped into subsets of legal, technical, or general usage? And how is the reader to know which type of logic structures a particular entry? What sort of logic is it that leads the *MED* to list the literary or book-related sense of *title*, the one with which modern readers will be most familiar, as its second major sense?³⁹

Neither currency nor chronology of usage adequately explains this order for *title*; subsets of related meanings might account for it, particularly if they are organized along the

³⁶ See Anthony Musson, *Medieval Law in Context: The Growth of Legal Consciousness from Magna Carta to the Peasant's Revolt* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001).

³⁷ The *MED*'s approach contrasts with the *OED* and the *OLD*, which are organized according to broadly chronological principles, see Simpson and Weiner, *OED*, I. vii-lxvii; Glare, *OLD*, pp. v-vi.

³⁸ Lewis, *MED*, A-B. 3.

³⁹ Lewis, *MED*, T. 754.

lines of this thesis's descriptive, designative and claimative groupings set out above, but given that the dictionary's editors admit 'that the arrangement chosen is sometimes rather arbitrary', the arrangement could be a matter of mere incidence.⁴⁰ Realizing the shortcomings of dictionary formats, the editors of the *MED* acknowledge that 'the inevitable unilinear presentation of the meanings obviously cannot reflect their multilinear filiation and interrelations', and they openly invite reconsideration:

[i]t is hoped that the number of quotations offered in support of the various meanings is large enough to furnish a starting point for a recasting of the scheme of meanings, or for a theory of semantic development, if anyone should wish to undertake such manipulations or investigations.⁴¹

The following section undertakes just such a recasting for *title*, by building on the scheme of meanings the *MED* sets out for *title* and advancing the multilinear theory of semantic development that it initiates but does not fully pursue.

3.1.3 Usage

The discussion so far has drawn solely on the information provided by standard dictionaries. Although it has viewed these definitions analytically and critically, this part of the thesis looks beyond mediated schemes of meaning to consider the primary sources themselves. The pervasive authority of dictionaries (or 'the dictionary') has already been noted, but on what does this assumed authority rest? According to lexicographer Henri Béjoint, it rests on a fallacy of objectivity:

[d]ictionaries are instruments for self-teaching and they have all the characteristics of all didactic books: they contain definitions, they give information which is presented as the knowledge and opinions of the community in general – as opposed to the knowledge and opinions of the lexicographer.⁴²

Each dictionary is the product of a lexicographer, or a group of lexicographers. These people and the dictionaries they make are motivated by individual, or sets of individual, experiences,

⁴⁰ Lewis, *MED*, A-B. 3.

⁴¹ Lewis, *MED*, A-B. 3.

⁴² Henri Béjoint, *Tradition and Innovation in Modern Dictionaries* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 18.

knowledge, agendas, preferences, and so on. They make decisions about the words that will be included in their dictionaries, the information that will accompany these choices, and the ways in which all of this will be organized. It is for this reason that dictionary definitions frequently conflict with one another.

It is also for this reason that dictionaries, in printed codex form, are always fundamentally limited. ‘All book dictionaries’, as Jean Aitchison points out, ‘are inevitably limited in the amount of information they contain, just because it would be quite impracticable to include all the possible data about each word’.⁴³ Over the course of recent decades, electronic and internet resources have opened up the possibility of comprehensive, constantly expanding repositories of words. And, though they still generally adhere to the structuring principles of their printed forerunners, web-based dictionaries in particular (with their extensive possibilities of hyperlinking) allow multiple and differing paths to coexist.⁴⁴ The potential of such resources has yet to be fully realized, but the prospects they offer for representing matrices (as opposed to genealogies) of meaning are both promising and encouraging. Making use of a number of these resources, the thesis turns its attention to the textual contexts of *title* to further its investigation of the semantic development of *title*, to the spidering of its meanings, in the premodern era.⁴⁵

On the strength of the *MED*’s sizeable entry for *title*, it seems that it could signify in much wider and disparate ways in Middle English than did its Latin or Old English predecessors (and even its Modern English successor). The entry stretches, with its various extensions (*titleles*, *titlen*, *titlinge*), to three large pages. From layout alone, then, a *MED* user is likely to assume that *title* occupied a prominent place in the vocabularies of the people who spoke or wrote Middle English. The inclusion of a wealth of supporting quotations to

⁴³ Jean Aitchison, *Words in the Mind: An Introduction to the Mental Lexicon* (London: Blackwell, 1994), p. 11.

⁴⁴ See the online versions of the *OED* (<http://www.oed.com>) and the *MED* (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med>).

⁴⁵ The databases used in this section include: *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*, ed. Frances McSparran (2006). Available at: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/> [accessed 06 March 2010]; *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire (2001). Available at: <http://leme.library.utoronto.ca/> [accessed 06 March 2010].

illustrate the actual uses of the word in its different senses lends what seems to be incontrovertible weight to the medieval currency of *title*; furthermore, the fairly equal distribution of quotations among the senses suggests that its uses were multiple.

A search of the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*, a database containing around 146 items of Middle English literature, however, suggests this might not be the case. Entering 'title' into this database's search tool returns 680 matches in seventy-four records which suggests a relatively high level of frequency.⁴⁶ A large proportion of these matches, however, are to modern editorial uses of the word *title* (concerning, for example, running titles or conflicting titles across the manuscript witnesses) found in the notes accompanying the texts.⁴⁷ Indeed, if alternative Middle English spellings are used as substitute search terms (in an effort to circumvent modern usages), the rates of occurrence fall off abruptly: 'titel' has forty-four matches in sixteen records; 'titil' has forty-three matches in seven records; 'titul' has just three matches in three records. This is, of course, only a small sample of surviving texts and the searches are themselves selective, but these findings, their validity, and their possible implications, are explored in more detail in the rest of this discussion.

Modern dictionaries do not always tell the whole story when it comes to words and their meanings; indeed, the semantic narratives they relate tend towards oversimplification, bridgement and generalization. Dictionary definitions, and the information they provide, have, therefore, the potential to restrict and sometimes to obscure a word's range of significations. The supporting quotation is a particularly problematic site. Limits of space mean that these confirmatory quotations are usually confined to one or two lines of text, and a certain element of detachment, or rather decontextualization, is always involved. Rarely there any indication of the wider textual contexts of these lines, and as context is a (if not

The following statistics are based on searches of the *Corpus of Middle English* [accessed 06 March 2010]. See, for example, the 'result details' for *The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, with the apocryphal Books* which, if the results are sorted in order of frequency, comes at the head of the 'search results' with 208 matches.

the) crucial factor in determining how or what a word might mean, this isolation means that the dictionary user is always reliant on a proxy interpretation. That is to say, to rely on the *MED*, *OLD* or *OED* is to rely on a lexicographer's, or a group of lexicographers', interpretations of a word, its context, and the text in which it appears. A supporting quotation, therefore, does not necessarily provide the dictionary user with a concrete form of semantic evidence; it does not necessarily provide him/her with unequivocal access to and understanding of that word and its meanings. Such quotations should always be approached with a degree of caution and/or suspicion.

The way in which standard dictionaries' definitions are set out, simplify the relationship between sense and supporting quotation. When a specific quotation is listed under a specific sense, the dictionary user's automatic response is to read that quotation in the light of that sense. The point might seem obvious, but the limiting effects of these directed readings are not so. For example, when the *MED* cites the lines, 'Herry the Fyfþe..hath conquered his herytage ageyn And..Recured eke his trewe title of Fraunce', from the end of John Lydgate's *Troy Book* (c. 1412-20), in support of the sense '[a] legal right to the possession of land or immovable property', rather than for any other of the eight senses (and their additional sub-senses), there seems no reason for the user to doubt the link because it makes good sense.⁴⁸ But, if the user decides to consult an edition of Lydgate's work, s/he will find that this two-line quotation is actually a condensation of eleven lines of text:

Herry the Fyfþe, the noble worthi kyng
 And protector of Brutis Albyoun,
 And called is thorough his highe renoun,
 Thorough his prowes and his chivalrie,
 Also fer as passeth clowde or skye,
 Of Normaundie the myghti conquerour.
 For thorough his knyghthod and diligent labour,
 Maugre alle tho that list hym to withseyn,
 He hath conquered his herytage ageyn
 And by his myghti prudent governaunce

⁴⁸ Lewis, *MED*, T. 755.

Recured eke his trewe *title* of Fraunce.⁴⁹

Read in the context of this passage, in which there is an abundance of designations ('Herry the Fyfthe' (l. 3376), 'noble worthi kyng' (l. 3376), 'protector of Brutis Albyoun' (l. 3377), 'myghti conquerour' (l. 3381), and the importance of 'herytage' (l. 3384) is emphasized, it might also be argued that *title* instead has the sense of '[a]n appellation attaching to an individual or family by virtue of rank, social position, or office'.⁵⁰ Extra weight is lent to this reading by the lines that directly follow the *MED*'s shortened quotation:

That whoso liste loken and unfolde
 The pedegrew of cronycles olde
 And cerchen bokes ywrite longe afor,
 He shal fynde that he is justly born
 To regne in Fraunce by lyneal descent
 (ll. 3387-91)

Again, the importance of Henry's ancestry, his 'pedegrew' (l. 3388) and 'lyneal descent' (l. 3391) which is recorded in books with equally estimable histories, is given further accent. Yet the two senses, both legal and appellative, are not of necessity mutually exclusive. That Henry V recovers 'his trewe title of Fraunce' (l. 3386) simultaneously indicates his reclamation of the right to the rule the territory of France as well as his resumption of his father Henry IV's claim to the nomenclature, 'King of France'; indeed, each sense is inextricably bound to the other. There is additional support for this interpretation of Middle English *title* in its Latin and Old English roots, for in the *St Mark's Gospel* (as it appears in both the Latin Vulgate and Lindisfarne versions) both *titulus* and *titul* refer to the text of the inscription on Christ's cross, 'rex Iudaeorum' or 'King of the Jews', which is at once a claim as well as an appellative label.⁵¹

⁴⁹ John Lydgate, *Troy Book: Selections*, ed. Robert R. Edwards (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998), 5. 3376-86 [emphasis added]. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

⁵⁰ Lewis, *MED*, T. 754.

⁵¹ Mark. 15. 26 (Latin Vulgate Bible).

Dictionaries and the details they choose to provide frequently obscure such intricacies of meaning. Looking past the dictionaries themselves to the textual contexts in which the words were once used allows some of their semantic complexity to come to the fore. A return to the ‘earliest dictionaries’, which is Ferry’s solution to uncovering the previous meanings of *title*, is not especially desirable and even if it was, there would be a difficult task of finding any for the very ‘earliest’ periods and those dictionaries that do survive are quite different from the familiar modern format.⁵² Although Green astutely asserts that ‘[l]exicography, the writing of dictionaries, is as old as written language’, tracing it back to surviving Sumerian word-lists through the Greek *glossai* and Roman *vocabularia* to the glosses and *glossae collectae* of the Middle Ages, the general consensus is that no dictionary resembling the extensive modern monolingual model survives before the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁵³ As a consequence, any semantic consideration that wishes to go beyond the already mediated authority of modern-era dictionaries is dependent on the evidence contained in the extant vernacular manuscripts – whether literary, legal, ecclesiastical, household, or other – and gathered by searches (either manual or electronic) of them.

Given this thesis’s specific focus on literary titling, the searches for Middle English uses of the word *title* which follow and the subsequent (con)textual reconsiderations of them are limited to texts of a literary nature. A search of the Corpus shows that the word *title* is found four times in the B-text of *Piers Plowman* (c. 1378). Three of these uses occur within eleven lines of each other in Passus XI where the narrator, Will, speaks against the decline of the priesthood:

That if thei travaille truweliche and truste in God almyghty,
Hem sholde lakke no liflode, neyther lynnene ne woollen.
And the *title* that ye take orders by telleth ye ben avaunced;

⁵² Ferry, *Title to the Poem*, p. 8.

⁵³ Green, *Chasing the Sun*, p. 39. Green’s book provides a full overview of the historical development of the dictionary. Robert Cawdrey’s *A Table Alphabeticall* of 1604 is widely regarded as the first dictionary along modern monolingual lines; however, Green argues that the ‘first the English dictionary “proper” is the *Promptorium parvulorum*’ (p. 54) of the mid-fifteenth century.

Thanne nedeth yow nocht to [nyne] silver for masses that ye syngen.
 For he that took yow youre *title* sholde take yow youre wages,
 Or the bisshop that blessed yow, if that ye ben worthi.
 For made nevere kyng no knyght but he hadde catel to spende
 As bifel for a knyght, or foond hym for his strengthe.
 It is a careful knyght, and of a caytif kynges making,
 That hath no lond ne lynage riche ne good loos of hise handes.
 The same I segge for soothe by alle swiches preestes
 That han neither konnyng ne kyn, but a crowne one
 And a *title*, a tale of nocht, to his liflode at meschief.⁵⁴

A. V. C. Schmidt in his *Piers Plowman: A New Translation of the B-text* simply translates *title* in all three instances as ‘claim’.⁵⁵ However, in their consistency, these substitutions lead to awkwardness of expression – ‘the very claim to financial solvency’ or ‘claim to entitlement’ – and, in its specificity, this phrasing closes down the layering of meaning which permeates the Middle English original.

Sense seven of the *MED* specifies an exclusively religious context: ‘[a] certificate of presentment to a benefice, a certificate of entitlement given when one is ordained’, and it can be seen to signify in this way throughout the discussion of the priesthood above.⁵⁶ But other senses of *title* are also at work in this passage. For example, in its first use, *title* seems to carry an added sense of authority, both that of priest’s position of entitlement and this thesis argues (against Schmidt’s reading of the passage) the underlying spiritual authority (God) that confers it.⁵⁷ As deployed in the passage, *title* can be seen to bear several connotations simultaneously: indeed the composite sense of entitlement and authority, which is both spiritual and earthly, is discernible too in the second and third uses of the word. Furthermore, the reiteration of the word might suggest a pun in which the ambiguity of *title* in its different settings reflects (or perhaps offsets) the precariousness of priestly authority.

⁵⁴ William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Critical Edition of the B-text based on Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17*, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (London: Dent, 1978), XI. 286-98 [emphasis added].

⁵⁵ Langland, *Piers Plowman: A New Translation of the B-text*, trans. A. V. C. Schmidt (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 120-21.

⁵⁶ Lewis, *MED*, T. 755.

⁵⁷ For an alternative reading of this extract, see Schmidt’s notes to pp. 120-21 in Langland, *Piers Plowman*, pp. 300-01.

Whichever way *title* is read in *Piers Plowman*, whether it is seen as having uncertain and multiple meanings or a more definite and specific sense, there is an intricate intersection, similar to that identified in Lydgate's *Troy Book* above, of the descriptive, designative and claimative groups of meaning in its usage. These semantic crossovers are also evident in other Middle English works in which the word *title* appears (which are, admittedly, few and far between), although the ways in and extent to which they intersect vary. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (c. 1380) provides several good examples. The first occurs at line 480 and serves as an earlier, more puzzling use of the phrase 'trewe title', discussed in relation to its meaning within Lydgate's *Troy Book* above. Following the Green Knight's departure from Camelot in Passus I, Arthur orders that his axe, Gawain's prize, be displayed as a trophy:

'Now sir, heng vp þyn ax, þat hatz innogh hewen.'
 And hit watz don abof þe dece on doser to henge,
 Þer alle men for meruayl myzt on hit loke,
 And bi trwe *tytel* þerof to telle þe wonder.⁵⁸

While there is general consensus among the poem's translators and editors that the sense of *title* in this line is of the claimative kind, with lines 479-80 usually rendered in a similar way to Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron's translation: '[w]here everyone could look at it in amazement and relate the wonder of it by true right', there is some uncertainty, as Andrew and Waldron go on to point out, regarding its object.⁵⁹ They immediately qualify the generally received translation with the observation that '[p]ossibly, however, *to telle* is grammatically parallel to *to henge*: the axe would tell its own wonderful story [...]; in this case we should read *þerof* with *tytel* rather than with *wonder*.'⁶⁰ This second possible reading of the lines brings with it an additional descriptive meaning for *title*, especially when read

⁵⁸ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. and trans. W. R. J. Barron (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), ll. 477-80 [emphasis added]. All further references to the original Middle English are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

⁵⁹ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 207-300 (p. 225 (note to l. 479)). For similar translations of these lines, see *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, trans. Jessie L. Weston (New York: Dover, 2003), p. 10; Barron, *Gawain*, p. 57.

⁶⁰ Andrew and Waldron, *Gawain*, p. 225.

within the light of the earlier lines in which the Green Knight offers his ‘giserne ryche’ (ll. 288) as a prize to any knight that shall join him in his ‘Crystemas gomen’ (l. 283). In this context, the phrase ‘bi trwe tytel’ can be seen to denote the appropriate and rightful symbolic nature of the axe on display.

A slightly different use of the word *title* is found in Passus III of the poem during another of the noble lady’s morning visits to Gawain. Speaking of the code of chivalry, the lady claims that ‘[f]or to telle of þis teuelyng of þis trwe kny3tez,/Hit is þe tytelet token and tyxt of her werkkez’ (ll. 1514-5). The sense of ‘tytelet’ here is interesting in that it seems to have a literary, designative sense. Indeed, the translators and editors of *Sir Gawain* confirm this link, as the word ‘tytelet’ is commonly translated as the modern word ‘title’: W. R. J. Barron, for example, translates line 1515 as ‘the inscribed title and text of these works’ and W. A. Nielson, similarly, translates it as ‘it is the title, token and text of their works’.⁶¹ Andrew and Waldron, however, suggest another possible reading of these lines: ‘for to speak of the striving (*teuelyng*) of true knights [...] it is the rubric written at the head of their works, and the very words themselves’.⁶² For Andrew and Waldron, ‘tytelet’ signifies something more akin to the Latin *titulus* and, in this way, can be seen to carry a more descriptive sense. Given that descriptive forms of textual identification prevail in the late Middle Ages, as the later chapters of this thesis show, this additional sense seems particularly persuasive.

The different senses of *title* seen in Passus I and III of *Sir Gawain* coincide in the use of *title* in Passus II. During his description of the gold pentangle that adorns Gawain’s shield, the narrator takes some time to explain why the symbol is so suited to this particular knight:

And quy þe pentangel apendez to þat prynce noble
 I am in tent yow to telle, þof tary hyt me schulde:
 Hit is a syngne þat Salamon set sumquyle
 In bytoknyng of trawþe, bi *tytle* þat hit habbez,
 For hit is a figure þat haldez fyue poyntez,

⁶¹ Barron, *Gawain*, p. 113; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, trans. W. A. Nielson (Cambridge, ON: In parentheses, 1999), p. 31. Available at: http://www.yorku.ca/inpar/sggk_neilson.pdf [accessed 22 March 2010].

⁶² Andrew and Waldon, *Gawain*, p. 263 (note to ll. 1514-6).

And vche lyne vmbelappez and loukez in oþer,
 And ayquere hit is endelez; and Englych hit callen
 Oueral, as I here, þe endeles knot.
 Forþy hit acordez to þis knyzt and to his cler armez,
 For ay faythful in fyue and sere fyue syþez.
 (ll. 623-32 [emphasis added])

The narrator goes on to outline the pentangle's significance for Gawain, especially in terms of the number five, in increasing detail in the lines following this excerpt. *Title* in this passage, then, appears to signify the legitimacy of the association between Gawain and the 'syngne þat Salamon set' (l. 625): the pentangle is a token of truth and fidelity 'bi tytyle' (l. 626), as it 'haldez fyue poyntez' (l. 627), and each of its lines overlap and interlock, forming an 'endeles knot' (l. 630). The difficulty of this phrase is suggested by its varying Modern English translations. In line with senses five and six of the *MED*, Nielson, drawing solely on *title*'s claimative senses, renders the phrase 'bi tytyle þat hit habbez' as 'by its own right'.⁶³ Barron, on the other hand, reduces the phrase to the single word, 'appropriately': a choice which relates to the descriptive and designative senses of *title*.⁶⁴ The much earlier prose translation by Jessie L. Weston in 1898 omits the phrase altogether, which can itself be seen as a sign of the difficulty involved in translating it.⁶⁵ The sense of *title* in the passage would seem to lie somewhere between Barron's and Nielson's translations; indeed, it seems to lie closer to what Andrew and Waldron suggest in their note to this line where the phrase is taken to mean 'by its intrinsic right'.⁶⁶ This particular use of *title* within *Sir Gawain* indicates that the pentangle is not only the rightful symbol for Gawain but that it is also a fitting one too; thus it fulfils a descriptive, claimative and designative function (although this is achieved through non-verbal means) in relation to him.

⁶³ Nielson, *Gawain*, p. 14; Barron, *Gawain*, p. 65. For the descriptive and designative meanings see sense 1-4 and 7-8 in Lewis, *MED*, T. 753-5.

⁶⁴ Barron, *Gawain*, p. 65.

⁶⁵ Weston, *Gawain*, p. 13.

⁶⁶ Andrew and Waldron, *Gawain*, p. 231 (note to l. 626).

A comparable intersection of the title's claimative, descriptive and designative senses is found in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (c. 1390), though the emphasis in this particular appearance lies with the verbal rather than the non-verbal: with names rather than symbols. In the fourth book of Gower's poem, which focuses on the fourth deadly sin of sloth, the word *title* is used by Genius to describe the links that philosophers made between various precious metals and the planets:

Of the Planetes ben begonne:
The gold is *titled* to the Sonne,
The mone of Selver hath his part,
And Iren that stant upon Mart,
The Led after Satorne groweth,
And Jupiter the Bras bestoweth,
The Coper set is to Venus,
And to his part Mercurius
Hath the quikselver.⁶⁷

Again, the polysemy of Middle English *title* resounds in this passage. To say that gold is 'titled to' (l. 2468) the sun is to say that gold is related, in an apt and legitimate way, to the sun.

As it is deployed in the examples from Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Lydgate's *Troy Book*, *title* can signify variously, even when confined to a particular setting. That this type of conglomerate usage is prevalent in the Middle English language (and a reconsideration of the *MED*'s supporting quotations offers additional support for this assertion as the discussion below demonstrates) further suggests that the claimative, descriptive and designative senses of *title* were not necessarily separated from each other at this time, and that, if they were not indivisible, then they were at least intrinsically linked.

The definitions of words in standard monolingual dictionaries like the *MED* are usually divided into individual senses which are organized unilinearly. Given their

⁶⁷ John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, in *The Complete Works of John Gower: The English Works*, ed. G. C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon, 1901), pp. 1-430, II. 4. 2467-75 [emphasis added]. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

widespread use as a reference tool, such dictionaries can be said to condition modern readers' expectations and understandings in respect of words and how and what they can mean. Words, they have been taught, mean *either* this *or* that and very rarely both. Even the *MED*, which explicitly acknowledges the complexities of Middle English word meanings in its prefatory matter, chooses to replicate the separation and sequential ordering of the senses adopted in other dictionaries. As they currently stand, then, dictionaries and the habits they instil and promote do not accommodate those situations where words signify, intentionally or otherwise, polysemously. In this way, dictionaries, and particularly the formats they replicate, can be said to reduce considerably a word's ability to signify.

The assignment of supporting quotations to specific senses, in particular, can limit the ambit of a word's significations. It requires circumspection from the reader. With its abundance of meanings, the entry for *title* in the *MED* is *apropos* here, and there are numerous possible examples for this thesis to draw on within it, but, given its literary focus, the quotations selected for reconsideration are limited to those found in connection with *title*'s meanings in relation to books and texts. The *MED* cites the line '[g]o litel bille without title or date' from Lydgate's *Look in Thy Merour* (c. 1445), as an instance of title meaning: '[t]he name of a book or a section of a book; a descriptive heading for a book or a section of a book.'⁶⁸ But this is not the only way for *title* to signify in this line; indeed, the pairing of *title* and *bille* – two words possessing legal and political currency alongside their literary significance in medieval England – indicates that another reading is possible.⁶⁹ Following the *MED*, *bille* could refer to '[a] formal document (embodying a will, a permit, etc.)', '[a] formal plea or charge', '[a] formal written petition (addressed to the King, Parliament, a monastic house, etc.)', '[a] written agreement or contract', '[a] statement or record (of

⁶⁸ John Lydgate, *Look in Thy Merour*, in *The Minor Poems of Lydgate: Part II, The Secular Poems*, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 765-72 (l. 209). All further references are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated; Lewis, *MED*, T. 754.

⁶⁹ This discussion *title*, *bille* and *date*, and the possible connections between them, is indebted to Mark Ormrod who helped with the fine-tuning of the legal and political points.

receipts, expenses, debts, services rendered, etc.)', as well as '[a] personal letter, message, or note'.⁷⁰ The meanings of *bille* are primarily legal and political. *Title*, when read in the light of *bille*, could be seen to signify in Lydgate's line one or more of its claimative senses, perhaps meaning 'the grounds or basis for a legal claim; a reason or cause' or even a more general 'claim or right'.⁷¹

To the modern reader this may seem like stretching a point. The line in question is, after all, the opening line of Lydgate's poetic envoy to *Look in Thy Merour* and this context surely points to a literary meaning for *title*. A reading of the entire 'Lenvoye', however, does not completely support such an assumption:

Go litel bille withoute title or date,
 And of hool herte recomaund[e] me,
 Which that am callyd Iohn Lydgate,
 To alle tho folk which lyst to haue pite
 On them that suffre trouble and adversite,
 Beseche hem alle that the shal reede a-riht,
 Mercy to medle with trouthe and equityte,
 Look weel your myroures and deeme noon othir wiht
 (ll. 209-16).

Firstly, the envoy takes the form of a petition or *pleinte*, itself a legal/political mode, by the speaker, 'Iohn Lydgate' (l. 211), who asks that those who read his 'litel bille' (l. 209) will 'reede a-riht' (l. 214), balancing compassion with honesty and justice. Secondly, much of the language of these concluding stanzas, including 'recomaund[e]' (l. 210), 'pite' (l. 212), 'trouble' (l. 213), 'adversite' (l. 213), 'beseche' (l. 214), 'mercy' (l. 215), 'trouthe' (l. 215), 'equyte' (l. 215), 'deeme' (l. 216), would not be out of place in the medieval law courts and parliamentary gatherings. Furthermore, the poem's usual refrain, '[I]ook in the merour and deeme noon other wight', indicates that judgement is one of its central concerns. All this

⁷⁰ See 'bille, n.', Lewis, *MED*, A–B. 859–860. For further discussions, particularly of the political and literary meanings, of *bille*, see Wendy Scase, "'Strange and Wonderful Bills": Bill-Casting and Political Discourse in Late Medieval England', in *New Medieval Literatures*, ed. Rita Copeland *et al.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), II. 225–248; Joel Fredell, "'Go litel quaier": Lydgate's Pamphlet Poetry', *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 9 (2006), 51–73.

⁷¹ Lewis, *MED*, T, 754.

considered, it is not entirely inconceivable for *title* to be read in terms of one or other of its claimative senses in Lydgate's poem.

This is not to argue that the legal senses of *title* regularly usurp literary meanings in Middle English literature, though. Nor is it to suggest that the *MED* is wrong in consigning Lydgate's line to a literary sense (or indeed in its allocation of other quotations to other senses). The contention, instead, is that dictionaries, through their divisions of meanings and their unilinear organization of these divisions inevitably shut down a word's signifying potential. The order that dictionaries impose on the meaning of words conflicts with the fluidity evident in the punning and word play found throughout Middle English literature (and indeed literature from any period). Quite often, as seems to be the case with the word *title* as it is used in Lydgate's *Look in Thy Merour* and Langland's *Piers Plowman*, the possibilities of signification – the multiplicities, the ambiguities, the indeterminacies – are the meaning itself. But, when a modern reader encounters the word *title* in a Middle English, or indeed any other, literary work s/he is likely, given its current primacy, to presume that it denotes the name of a book. Yet what is most striking with regards to the Middle English usage of *title* is that, even when the word is found in literary works or settings, it seldom carries its purely literary sense – that is, the name of a book – with it.

The *MED* implicitly concurs, as the relative distribution of supporting quotations intimates that *title* was used less frequently in its literary senses, than it was in, for example, its legal senses. Indeed, the use of the word *title* in the Middle English literary works that have been considered above suggests that its meaning was, at this time, compounded: its designative, descriptive, and claimative senses bound together inextricably. It is this conglomerate sense that seems to have been most current in the literature of medieval England. This sense that eludes the definitions of *title* in modern dictionaries as their divisions and unilinear ordering cannot accommodate such fluidity.

What can be said with some certainty, however, regarding the Middle English word *title* is that its semantic range was wide and somewhat indefinite. The etymology mapped in this section, unlike those traced by other etymologists, critics and lexicographers, tries to give space to this fluidity. It is an etymology made up of numerous, differing, interconnecting etymologies. It is less a genealogy, tracing a single, definite line of descent, and more a network of semantic possibilities, a matrix made up of contiguous as well as consecutive, partial as well as full, interrelated and unrelated, lines of development. It is with this kind of etymology in mind that the thesis contests Howard Jackson's assertion that etymology has no relevance for contemporary meaning:

[e]tymology does not make a contribution to the description of the contemporary meaning and usage of words [...] Etymology offers no advice to one who consults a dictionary on the appropriate use of a word in the context of a written text or spoken discourse. It merely provides some passing insight for the interested dictionary browser with the requisite background knowledge and interpretative skills.⁷²

In the same way that it argued for the importance of evolutionary change when considering the literary title as it is now, this thesis maintains that the history of a word's meanings is vital to the understanding of its contemporary usage: each has become what it is because of what it once was. Etymologies are not merely a matter of incidental interest, nor are they only important for, as Jackson suggests, 'guarding against any temptation to linguistic xenophobia or notions of linguistic purity'.⁷³ As this chapter has shown, etymologies can disclose a wealth of information about the past and present usage and meanings of a word. Etymology may not, as Derrida points out, provide 'the guarantee of a concept', but what it can do is open that concept out in a variety of illuminating directions.⁷⁴

⁷² Jackson, *Lexicography*, p. 127.

⁷³ Jackson, *Lexicography*, p. 127.

⁷⁴ Derrida, 'Title', p. 20.

3.2 Early Practices

What I have in mind here is voluntarily ‘impure’ theory: project-oriented, aimed at explaining the text rather than its own vindication, unisistent about its own status as a total explanatory system. [...] It might occasionally be angular or difficult, if the concepts in question require it, but it should normally be susceptible to clear articulation, in the ordinary language of women and men.

(Paul Strohm)⁷⁵

3.2.1 From the Earliest Ancient Practices

Etymologies offer just one of the possible routes into a consideration of titling practices in premodernity. The previous section argues that the word *title* (and its various roots) could signify diversely at this time and that, perhaps as a result of this motility, its literary links were not as clear or insistent as they are today. In terms of the English word *title*, its infrequent use in both Old English and Middle English, and considering that on those occasions when Middle English *title* is used its sense is generally conglomerate, where its literary senses are regularly entwined with its claimative senses, could be taken as a sign that the naming of compositions was not considered a distinct aspect of literary production or reception. These conclusions are, however, based on the rare explicit references to the words *titulus*, *titul*, and *title* found in premodern literary texts and so can only provide a rudimentary indication of the ways in which these words, in their various applications, were talked and thought about.

There is always the distinct possibility that the titling (or non-titling) of premodern texts did not merit much in the way of comment or explanation by medieval readers and/or listeners. The naming of compositions may have been unimportant. Or perhaps it was always an intrinsic part of textual production and, for this reason, was unremarkable. Answers to these kinds of question are not attainable through etymological study alone; they demand a different approach, one that will focus on how, in what ways, and to what purposes titling

⁷⁵ Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. xi.

was employed in the production of literature, rather than how it was discussed within it. Aligning itself with Paul Strohm's sentiments in the epigraph above, the following section addresses itself to the methods and forms of the earliest titling practices in the hope that it will offer some new insights into the significance of literary titling in the premodern period and to current understandings of it. In many ways, however, the thesis advances Strohm's practical, 'project-oriented' methodology as its overriding diachronic perspective and the specificity of its particular material focus (the titling practices of premodern texts) produces a much more unified and, moreover, a much more sympathetic approach to premodern textuality.⁷⁶

Before proceeding any further, a number of tentative criteria as to what may constitute a titling practice must be set out. For the moment, the thesis considers anything (whether sign, symbol, word, image, or other) that serves to distinguish or identify a literary work (through designation, description, appellation, separation, or other method) as a form of titling practice. This is a purposefully inclusive definition – which refuses to stipulate the mode, location, function, origin of, or the type of information provided by, these practices – so as to allow for the vast variety of practices that over four millennia of oral and written production will generate. In this way, it is also a working definition which will be tested and revised throughout the rest of the chapter as well as during the remainder of the thesis; in this way, then, to borrow Strohm's words once more, this study is entirely 'uninsistent about its own status as a total explanatory system'.⁷⁷

In refusing to lay down a stringent definition at this stage, the thesis avoids establishing a typology of premodern titling practice. This is intentional. As the preceding chapter suggests, typologies, particularly as they have been deployed at times in titology, often inhibit understanding through their artificial separations and their excessive

⁷⁶ Strohm, *Premodern Text*, p. xi.

⁷⁷ Strohm, *Premodern Text*, p. xi.

prescriptiveness; as a result, typologies tend to be characteristic of the more problematic, less persuasive of the existing titological studies.⁷⁸ At certain points, however, it is necessary to consider similar practices of titling collectively (the grouping together of *incipit* forms of titling, discussed earlier on in the thesis, is an example here), but these groupings usually encompass a diversity of forms and are, in this way, constituted elastically. Moreover, these groupings are always formed out of, and are at the service of, the material evidence, and so are at all times open to reconsideration as new findings or alternative readings of existing material come to light. If premodern titling practices can be characterized by anything, then it is by their pluralities, their instabilities, their inconsistencies, and, in a great many cases, they are (or appear to be) completely absent; such flexibility, therefore, is not only productive but wholly necessary.

English practices of titling are traceable, in much the same way as the meanings of the word *title* are, to multiple, often intersecting derivations, which means that there is an abundance of possible routes into the title's prehistory. This thesis can begin to chart only a few. It is, first and foremost, a study of English titling practices, and it is for this reason (and others that will be made apparent in due course) that the final chapters of this thesis focus on the development of titling practices across selected vernacular manuscripts of the Middle Ages. Constraints of space mean that the study restricts its scope to those earlier practices which appear to have bearing, whether in terms of similarity or disparity, on the modes and methods of Middle English titling on which the final chapters of the thesis centre.

Because of its diachronic aims, this discussion begins with a consideration of some of the earliest known forms of titling practice: those of antiquity. Perhaps one of the only things that can be asserted with any confidence regarding the role and status of titling in antiquity is

⁷⁸ For one of the more problematic typologies, see Tim Whitmarsh, 'The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre', *American Journal of Philology*, 126 (2005), 587-611. Problems arise from his unquestioning application of the modern concept of title, from which his typology of Greek novel titles stems. For further exploration of these issues see the discussion later in this chapter.

that it is an area which triggers divergent opinions among academics.⁷⁹ While some scholars can speak of Greco-Roman titles with no reservations at all, others maintain that titles were not, or were very seldom, used in conjunction with these compositions.⁸⁰ The evidence itself, however, points to somewhere between these extremes, with the title in its modern sense hovering somewhere between currency and redundancy in ancient usage.

By way of example, in ancient Mesopotamia texts were inscribed on clay tablets which were stored on shelves, in small compartments, or in labelled baskets in the libraries or repositories of the period. There is some surviving evidence to suggest that, if there was ever a need to distinguish between these different collections of tablets, basket tags or shelf records would be used. Yet this sort of identification differs in two major respects from that provided by the modern title: firstly, it is often collective rather than individual and, secondly, it is generally more descriptive than designative. According to Eleanor Robson, who offers an illuminating overview of this neglected episode of book history, ‘ancient catalogues and shelf lists point to locally meaningful thematic groupings of literary works’, and so it is likely that the clay tablets which contained these literary works were sorted in line with this kind of system.⁸¹

A similar process of labelling appears to have been used with later Greek and Latin rolls. Cornelia Roemer, in an article devoted to the papyrus roll, explains that, in order ‘[t]o see the content of the book without unrolling it to its end, little pieces of papyrus or parchment, so-called *sillyboi*, were glued to the upper margin of the roll, hanging out and

⁷⁹ I am grateful to Alexandra Smith for her help with translation and analysis of the Greek and Latin sources referred to in this section.

⁸⁰ Scholars who assume the use of titles in antiquity (usually titological) include: Amiel D. Vardi, ‘Why *Attic Nights*? Or What’s in a Name?’, *Classical Quarterly*, 43 (1993), 298-301; Whitmarsh, ‘The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre’. For examples of the opposite opinion, see Eduard Lohan, *De librorum titulis apud classicos scriptores Graecos nobis occurrentibus* (n.p.: n. pub., 1890); Levin, ‘The Title as Literary Genre’, p. xxv.

⁸¹ Eleanor Robson, ‘The Clay Tablet Book in Sumer, Assyria, and Babylonia’, in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 67-83 (p. 73). This discussion of the titling practices of Sumer, Assyria and Babylonia is indebted to this article.

providing the title and the name of the author.’⁸² Roemer does not herself offer any instances of these *sillyboi* or *tituli*, but they are discussed in more detail in the individual studies of Greco-Roman titling practices by Lloyd Daly, Revido P. Oliver and Nicholas Horsfall. From the scant surviving evidence, Daly (drawing on W. Schubart and T. Birt) cites a number of Greek *sillyboi* that consist ‘simply of the author’s name or the author’s name plus a usually generic indication of the content of the roll.’⁸³ Oliver agrees with Daly’s summary, in essence, stating that the information *sillyboi* provide ‘appear[s] invariably to have been of the simplest possible form’; however, for Oliver as with Roemer, it is the ‘title of the work’ that has a place beside the author’s name.⁸⁴ Writing some thirty years later, Horsfall counters Daly’s and Oliver’s view that the ‘titles on *sillyboi* are given in an unspecific and “generic” form’ by inviting comparison between the information provided in one of Daly’s examples, P.Oxy.ii.301 which reads, ‘Sophron’s mimes on women’, and that of P.Oxy.xxiv.2396: ‘Tryphon son of Ammonius on the Spartan dialect in 2 (?) books.’⁸⁵ Although these critics disagree on the type of description that the ancient parchment strips could contain, they do all agree in one important respect: *tituli* and *sillyboi*, like the Mesopotamian basket labels before them, typically fulfilled a descriptive, as opposed to a designative, role.

The equivalence posited by critics in this area between Greco-Roman *tituli* and *sillyboi* and modern titles, therefore, is intrinsically problematic. Nor are they better described

⁸² Cornelia Roemer, ‘The Papyrus Roll Egypt, Greece, and Rome’, in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, pp. 84-94 (p. 86). Other concurring accounts of the *sillybos* can be found in: Revido P. Oliver, ‘The First Medicean MS of Tacitus and the Titulature of Ancient Books’, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 82 (1951), 232-61 (p. 243); Nicholas Horsfall, ‘Some Problems of Titulature in Roman Literary History’, *University of London, Institute of Classical Studies: Bulletin*, 28 (1981), 103-14 (p. 103); Herwig Maehler, ‘Books, Greek and Roman’, in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Available at: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t133.e107> [accessed 9 March 2010]. Genette provides a slightly differing account of the *titulus*, suggesting that these tags were attached to the *umbilicus* itself, see Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 64. Other statements/supporting evidence to corroborate Genette’s account have not been found.

⁸³ Lloyd W. Daly, ‘The Entitulature of Pre-Ciceronian Writings’, in *Classical Studies in Honor of William Abbott Oldfather* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1943), pp. 20-38 (p. 31).

⁸⁴ Oliver, ‘The Titulature of Ancient Books’, p. 243.

⁸⁵ Horsfall, ‘Some Problems of Titulature’, p. 110 (n. 4).

by Herwig Maehler's compound 'title-tags'.⁸⁶ Not only is a purely designative function rare among these ancient labels, but they regularly contain a variety of other information, including a description of the roll's contents, the number of lines filled, the author's name, specific dates and/or a generic indication. Like the baskets and shelves of Mesopotamia's libraries, Roman and Greek rolls did not always comprise of a single work, as Maehler points out: '[a] papyrus roll would take a book of Thucydides, or a play of c. 1500 lines, or two to three books of Homer.'⁸⁷ Papyrus rolls could hold whole works but they could also contain parts of longer compositions or a number of shorter works. The role and form of the *sillybos/titulus* could change to suit the requirements of the individual *volumen* and the text(s) it contained: *sillyboi/tituli* might indicate which book of however many books the roll contained; they might provide a collective description of the roll's contents; or they could describe the individual works of which the roll comprised. In which case, if the title is the name of a book, the *sillybos/titulus* appears to have been a good deal more than just that.

In spite of these differences, it is the modern title, more often than not, that scholars scour the texts of antiquity for. Indeed, all the criticism that considers the myriad practices for identifying ancient texts, whether it is titological or more generally historical in focus, refers to them collectively as titles. That is not to say that critics do not notice the differences between earlier practices and modern day titles. The use of the terms 'entitulation' and 'titulation' in many of these studies seems an implicit recognition of the inclusivity, the wide parameters, of ancient titling practice.⁸⁸ More overtly, Daly signals the distance between modern conceptions of the title and the titling practices of antiquity throughout his argument, while Horsfall begins his essay by defining what '[t]he "title" of a work of Greek or Latin can

⁸⁶ Maehler, 'Books, Greek and Roman'.

⁸⁷ Maehler, 'Books, Greek and Roman'.

⁸⁸ Studies that use the words titulation and entitulation include: Daly, 'Entitulation'; Oliver, 'The Titulation of Ancient Books'; Horsfall, 'Some Problems of Titulation'.

mean', whereupon he lists four distinctive titling practices.⁸⁹ Aside from this more general awareness, the terminological difficulties involved in studies of ancient titling practices are never directly addressed: none of the accounts suggest more suitable alternatives and the problems of applying the concept of the title as universal norm are completely ignored.

The broad application of the term *title*, and modern ideas about it, can lead to a great deal of conceptual confusion, as a number of recent titological investigations of classical texts show.⁹⁰ No real attempts are made in these studies to interrogate the concept, neither what title denotes nor how appropriate it might be: its relevance in all situations is automatically assumed. The preceding chapters have discussed in detail how the idea of the title is commonly drawn from modern (specifically printed) forms, meanings and uses, which means that, when used in its designative, literary sense, *title* carries with it a series of expectations and preconceptions and these can skew and confound considerations of the titling practices found in antiquity. In Vardi's discussion of what he deems are contemporaneous titles for Gellius's *Noctes Atticae*, for example, he spends some time considering their functions:

[titles] were first affixed to already circulating literary works to facilitate their identification and designation. But once it became customary for writers to label their works before publishing them, titles acquired a range of additional functions, from disclosing the content of the work to advertising it and attracting the attention of readers.⁹¹

What this thesis argues is a gradual, but non-linear, process of development spanning many thousands of years, Vardi locates (although he gives no specific dates to his timeline) decisively in the classical era. But the conditions that would enable the levels of standardization that Vardi supposes did not pertain in antiquity. Indeed, as the earlier parts of this section suggest, the development of titling practice in this period was more haphazard

⁸⁹ Daly, 'Entitulature', p. 30. This quotation can be found in full in the preceding chapters: 'Titles: Now and Then' (p. 1) and 'Modern Titology and Its Premodern Gap' (p. 47); Horsfall, 'Some Problems of Titulature', p. 103.

⁹⁰ Recent studies that do not interrogate the word title include: Vardi, 'Why *Attic Nights*?'; Whitmarsh, 'The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre'.

⁹¹ Vardi, 'Why *Attic Nights*?', p. 298.

than progressive; therefore, many of the functions Vardi posits – that titles should identify, designate, describe, advertise, attract, and, more crucially, that titles in their modern forms even existed – arise from modern assumptions. The term *title*, then, is not as unproblematic as it might seem when employed in titological investigations of the diachronic kind.

In fact, those scholars who claim that there were no titles in classical antiquity could be more accurate than they initially appear. Although there are numerous and varied titling practices, the title, in the form of a self-contained designation, is nowhere evident. In fact, the act of establishing titles for the works of antiquity (and for many later premodern works) is an implicitly editorial one, in which words that can be used as modern titles are lifted from more fluid ancient titling practices such as *tituli*, *incipit*-headings and *epigrammata*. Take, for example, one of the *epigramma* in the mutilated Codex Puteanus of the fifth century: ‘Titi . Liuii/Aburbe condita/Liber XXU/Explic Incipit/Liber XXUI/Feliciter’.⁹² It is from this sort of lengthier subscription that the often-used title of Livy’s work, *Ab urbe condita*, is selected. Indeed, many of the present titles for ancient works are, as the preponderance of prepositional phrases beginning ‘ab’/’from’, ‘de’/’of’ and ‘pro’/’for’ indicates, products of this kind of excerption.⁹³ When Oliver claims that the scribe of the Medicean manuscript of *Ab excessu Divi Augusti* ‘mistook the title of Tacitus’ work for a part of the text’, and declares that ‘we cannot suppose that he could have failed to recognize the title of his text’, he is applying his own contemporary and, therefore, anachronistic (para)textual principles to ancient processes of textual production and reading.⁹⁴ Those titling practices that survive from this period, however, suggest that classical readers, writers and listeners did not distinguish the various aspects of the (para)text as rigorously as do their modern counterparts.

⁹² For the layout of this subscription, see Oliver, ‘The Titulature of Ancient Books’, p. 238.

⁹³ In other cases prepositional phrases in the commonly used titles of Latin texts may describe the polemical purpose of a composition: Cicero’s *Pro Milone* is a speech ‘in defence of Milo’, a friend facing accusations in court, while Jerome’s *Adversus Jovinianum* is a treatise written ‘in opposition to Jovinian’, replying to the latter’s views about marriage and celibacy.

⁹⁴ Oliver, ‘The Titulature of Ancient Books’, pp. 234, 238.

More detailed consideration of the *epigramma*, another major titling practice found in Greek and Roman *volumina*, gives additional weight to this surmise. An *epigramma* is an inscription used with texts in roll form, and has its roots in the *epigraphe*, which John Bodel defines broadly as ‘a piece of writing or lettering engraved, etched, incised, traced, stamped, or otherwise imprinted into or onto a durable surface.’⁹⁵ *Epigrammata*, most scholars agree, are usually found at the end of a *volumen* under the last line of the last column where it seems it had a better chance of being preserved.⁹⁶ Indeed, from the surviving evidence, the concluding inscription or *subscriptio* appears to have been used more regularly with *volumina*, as a means of identifying or differentiating a text, than does the *sillybos* or *titulus*, although the higher incidence rates for the *subscriptio* may have much to do with its less vulnerable internal location. These textual inscriptions, like the epigraphs that preceded them, could be quite substantial, comprising of a brief description or announcement, a designation, material of a dedicatory nature, significant dates or locations; they might also, in order to fulfil their specifically textual purposes, include author names, the length of the work in terms of book or line numbers, its internal divisions, or other information pertinent to the work. In this respect, the ancient *subscriptio* betrays many similarities with later (perhaps more familiar) devices for identifying texts at their ends, such as the Latin offset *explicit*, which was particularly prevalent in the Middle Ages, or the later colophon, a device that developed out of printing (though the term is now applied much more broadly); indeed, the *subscriptio* is a convincing predecessor candidate for these later titling practices.

The information *epigrammata* and *sillyboi* could contain depended on a variety of factors including who was writing (whether it was a scribe, the author, an owner, a librarian), what information was available to him/her, the purpose for which s/he was writing, and when

⁹⁵ John Bodel, ‘Epigraphy and the Ancient Historian’, in *Epigraphic Evidence: Ancient History from Inscriptions*, ed. John Bodel (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1-56 (p. 2).

⁹⁶ Scholars who agree on the latter placement of the *epigramma* or *subscriptio* include: Daly, ‘Entitulature’, p. 31; Oliver, ‘The Titulature of Ancient Books’, pp. 243, 245; Horsfall, ‘Some Problems of Titulature’, p. 103; Roemer, ‘The Papyrus Roll’, p. 86; Maehler, ‘Books, Greek and Roman’.

and where the writing took place. Apart from a tendency towards ‘laconic simplicity’, as Oliver puts it, there were no established rules for these (para)textual devices.⁹⁷ There were no set standards regarding what a *subscriptio* or *titulus* should consist of, who should provide them, where they should be, what form they should take; indeed, there was nothing to stipulate their presence in relation to a text or as part of a *volumen* at all. This fluidity is reflected in the terminological inconsistency which is so characteristic of critical studies in this area, where there is frequently uncertainty, even within a single study, as to whether the ancient titling practices (as this thesis chooses to refer to them) should be pinned down as ‘titulature’, ‘entitulature’, ‘subscriptions’, ‘inscriptions’, or, as it most common, ‘titles’.⁹⁸ However they are referred to, the *epigrammata* and *sillyboi* of antiquity stand apart from current concepts of the title which is now understood to be the name of a work, first and foremost. This distance begs the question: did ancient compositions actually need names in the same way as modern works do?

The evidence surveyed so far suggests that the naming, or more specifically in modern senses the titling, of literary works was not a priority during classical antiquity. Considering the instability and mutability of textual production at this time, and indeed throughout the entire premodern period, the chances of a text possessing (or at least maintaining its possession of) a unique, stable form would have been slim to nil. It is unlikely, in such conditions, that texts possessed their own secure identities, in which case the need to ‘guarantee’ the identity of a work through naming or titling it, which Derrida posits as one of the primary purposes of the modern title, would have been negligible.⁹⁹ The demand for literary works was, when compared with later periods, relatively low. Extremely

⁹⁷ Oliver, ‘The Titulature of Ancient Books’, p. 246.

⁹⁸ One or more of these words are deployed in the following discussions: Daly, ‘Entitulature’; Oliver, ‘The Titulature of Ancient Books’; Horsfall, ‘Some Problems of Titulature’; Vardi, ‘Why *Attic Nights*?’; Whitmarsh, ‘The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre’.

⁹⁹ Jacques Derrida, ‘Before the Law’, in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 181-220 (p. 188).

low levels of literacy meant that texts were produced in much smaller numbers and, although booksellers might transport texts from one place to another, the circulation of texts was also greatly limited; it was not imperative, therefore, for texts to have individual, fixed names to facilitate identification and help distinguish one from the other. However, as quantities of texts began to be assembled together, both in public libraries (the most famous example of which is the Alexandrian Library) and in private collections (like those of Cicero and Varro), and as they were stored and organized within these repositories, the need to differentiate between texts or groupings of texts grew.¹⁰⁰ Even so, ancient librarians and cataloguers did not decide to give names or titles to individual texts in order to address this developing need; in most cases, it was the author's name to which they turned.

If it can be said that there was a principal means for identifying texts in antiquity, then the name of the author is the most likely candidate.¹⁰¹ Greco-Roman scholarship revolved around the figure of the author: curriculums were 'based on a progression from Homer to the orators' and libraries that supported and invigorated this learning sought to collect and assemble together the texts of the great authors, as the surviving vellum *sillybos* PAntinoop 1.21, bearing the words 'Pindaros holos' (or 'The Complete Pindar'), attests.¹⁰² It is little wonder that this authorial privileging is reflected in the contemporaneous attempts to itemize and/or systematize these collections. Writing about the configuration of Hellenistic libraries, P. J. Parsons describes how '[c]atalogues listed authors under broad subject-headings'.¹⁰³ Callimachus's *Pinakes*, one of the most celebrated library catalogues (or *indices*) from this period, is certainly structured along these lines. Closer to a bibliographical encyclopaedia than a catalogue, the *Pinakes* is organized by subject (law, rhetoric, poetry, miscellaneous

¹⁰⁰ More detailed accounts of the libraries of antiquity can be found in: P. J. Parsons, 'Libraries', in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*. Available at: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t133.e369> [accessed 13 April 2020]; Roemer, 'The Papyrus Roll', pp. 89-90.

¹⁰¹ The idea that the author's name was a primary reference tool in antiquity is also espoused by Daly, 'Entitulature', p. 30.

¹⁰² Roemer, 'The Papyrus Roll', p. 92.

¹⁰³ Parsons, 'Libraries'.

prose, medicine) under which authors' names are listed alphabetically. 'More than a book-list', Nita Krevans concurs in her review of Callimachus's prose works, the *Pinakes* also 'provides biographical information and evaluations of the work as well as librarian-friendly information such as *incipits* (the first words of the text, here, rather than a style of heading) and line-counts.'¹⁰⁴ It appears that the names of works – that is, their titles in their modern sense – do not appear among the useful referential data that Callimachus chooses to log: the work's *incipit* and/or a description, alongside the author's name and overall subject heading, was considered adequate. In some cases, when an author had written several works for example, additional differentiation might be necessary, but a genre indication (as in Plutarch's *Moralia*, Alcman's *Partheneion* or Horace's *Epistulae*) or a brief content description (along the lines of Pliny's *Naturalis historia* or Xenophon's *Hellenica*) usually proved sufficient.¹⁰⁵ *Indices*, like *sillyboi*, rarely named the texts which they identified; the author's name, sometimes coupled with generic descriptors or sometimes with the work's opening lines, was identification enough.

Systems for identifying texts existed in antiquity. Yet the extant *indices*, *epigrammata*, *sillyboi* and *tituli* suggest that, contrary to modern methods, the naming of the work was not an intrinsic feature of the identification process. If the literary work did not possess its own stable identity, then there was no 'identity', 'unity' or 'boundaries' for the name or title to 'guarantee'.¹⁰⁶ To look for the name of a work, to search for the title, in ancient texts, therefore, is a futile exercise. Studies that restrict their focus to locating the title in its modern guise, or that interpret ancient practices in the light of contemporary expectations and assumptions about titles, can overlook significant aspects of classical

¹⁰⁴ Nita Krevans, 'Callimachus and the Pedestrian Muse', in *Callimachus II*, ed. M. A. Harder, R. F. Regtuit and G. C. Wakker (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), pp. 173-84 (p. 173).

¹⁰⁵ The use of generic indications to distinguish further, in cases where an author who has written several works, is also noted by Daly, 'Entitulature', p. 30. However, Daly has recourse, unlike this thesis, to the word 'title' in this instance.

¹⁰⁶ Derrida, 'Before the Law', p. 188.

textuality: the importance of the *epigraphe* in the development of early titling practices, for instance, or the complex systems for distinguishing texts which predated the use of individual (and individualizing) names.

Within the inclusive definition proposed by this thesis, *tituli*, *sillyboi*, *epigrammata* and *indices* can be viewed as early forms of titling practice: that is, as something (whether sign, symbol, image, or other) that serves to distinguish and/or identify (through separation, description, designation, or other method) a literary text. The phrase ‘titling practices’ is not without its problems, however. With its connotations of naming and entitling, a titling practice could be deemed too restrictive for these ancient (para)textual features. They are, rather, identificatory practices. But, given the vast temporal scope of this study and the variety of practices of textual identification that thousands of years will produce, titling practices does offer the discussion a more expansive and inclusive definition. One thing can be asserted with some certainty though here, and this is that whatever these early practices are, they are not titles.

3.2.2 Into the Vernacular

By the fifth century, the codex had firmly supplanted the roll as the primary mode for transmitting literary works. Comprising, at first, wooden tablets fastened together with strips of leather, but later folded sheets of parchment (and occasionally papyrus), the book’s replacement of the scroll was by no means immediate. One of the more protracted transitions in the history of the book, the adoption of the codex stretched over four centuries, roughly coinciding with the widespread acceptance of Christianity in southern and western Europe. Many book historians, as a consequence, tend to see the two as having developed hand-in-

hand with each other.¹⁰⁷ Peter Stallybrass points out that ‘only 14 of the surviving 172 Christian texts written before the fifth century were written on scrolls’, and Bibles, in particular, survive almost exclusively in codex form.¹⁰⁸ It is highly probable that the early Christians favoured the codex for the difference it signalled, because, as Stallybrass goes on to say: ‘the distinction of the book from the scroll materially differentiated Christianity from Judaism.’¹⁰⁹ But the increasing preference for the codex format during the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries can also be explained by a number of its other features. Held between two covers, the book proved to be more durable, portable and easier to use than the roll; it also proved more economical as texts could be written on both sides of the parchment leaves, which meant its capacity was greater than that of the scroll.

Changes to the shape of the book had a direct impact on the texts it was designed to contain. Where reading before had been a continuous, progressive process in which the roll was simultaneously unwound and rewound, the codex form – with its separate, readily accessible pages – permitted readings of a non-linear, more intermittent style. As Stallybrass explains: ‘[o]ne cannot move easily back and forth between distant points on a scroll. But it is precisely such movement back and forth that the book permits. It not only allows discontinuous reading, it encourages it.’¹¹⁰ The codex format provided easier access to the work or, increasingly, the works it contained. While a roll could hold only a book or two of a longer work (a book from Thucydides’ *Historiae* or several of the briefer books from Homer’s *Iliad*, for example) or a single shorter composition (for example, Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*), a codex could take several books from a single work (all the books of

¹⁰⁷ The link between the codex form and Christianity is found in Maehler, ‘Books, Greek and Roman’; Michelle P. Brown, ‘The Triumph of the Codex: The Manuscript Book before 1100’, in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, pp. 179-193 (p. 179); Peter Stallybrass, ‘Books and Scrolls: Navigating the Bible’, in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, ed. Jennifer Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 42-79; Andrew Taylor, *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and Their Readers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2002), pp. 22-3.

¹⁰⁸ Stallybrass, ‘Books and Scrolls’, p. 43.

¹⁰⁹ Stallybrass, ‘Books and Scrolls’, p. 43.

¹¹⁰ Stallybrass, ‘Books and Scrolls’, p. 46.

Thucydides' *Hellenica*) or a selection of writings by same author (a good number of Sophocles' tragedies). Codices containing more than one work or sections of a work presented readers with the option, and increasingly, as discontinuous reading practices became widespread, the need, to navigate the material it held, to locate specific pieces within it.

Over the course of subsequent centuries, a series of devices, which would now be deemed paratextual, developed in order to facilitate the use (whether of the continuous or discontinuous kind) of this burgeoning textual medium. With regards to titling practices specifically, many of the previous methods used to distinguish between *volumina*, and more occasionally the texts within them, were adopted for and in a majority of cases adapted to the codex form. While there were many changes, there was one constant: the fluid conception of what a titling practice could be. As with the *tituli* and *epigrammata* of the rolls, there were no set rules regarding the hows, whats, whens, whos and whys of codical titling practice, and although certain standards, over centuries of copying, did gradually develop, uniformity of practice did not.

One practice which survived the change of medium with little modification and proved to have lasting medieval currency is the offset *incipit/explicit* form of textual identification. Once used to signal the beginning and end of a *volumen*, the *incipit* and *explicit* (meaning literally 'it begins' and 'it unrolls'), derivatives of the *epigramma*, now pointed up internal divisions within a codex, indicating the sections of a work, as in the eighth-century Lindisfarne Gospels, as well as separate compositions, as the Vespasian Psalter (London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian A. i), also of the eighth-century, shows.¹¹¹ Often simple and formulaic in their construction ('incipit prologus', 'explicit liber secundus',

¹¹¹ The thesis recognizes here that what may or may not have constituted/can be classified as a single autonomous work in premodernity is a matter of some academic debate. It is possible to consider the Lindisfarne Gospels as separate but thematically related pieces just as it is possible to see the Vespasian Psalter as representing a single but subdivided textual unit.

‘incipit argumentum’), usually picked out in red ink and/or distinguished through a more formal and/or sometimes larger style of script, the offset *incipits* and *explicitis* of insular books were easy to recognize, and so to locate, in the pages of a manuscript. As readers and producers of texts started to explore the possibilities of this new format – the types and amount of text it could hold, the access it allowed and the methods that might assist such retrieval – these titling practices began to acquire increasing structural significance.

Titling practices did not only become more functional in medieval books, they also (and perhaps partly because of their growing functionality) became part of these manuscripts’ decorative schemas. Indeed, the integration of text and decorative elements was one of the characteristic features of the insular book.¹¹² The early Middle Ages is a period renowned for its sumptuously ornate, richly illuminated Latin manuscripts such as the Lindisfarne Gospels, the Book of Kells (Dublin, Trinity College Library, A. 1. 6), and the Book of Durrow (Dublin, Trinity College Library, A. 4. 5), to name some of the better known examples.¹¹³ Undoubtedly, the elaborate embellishment accorded to these codices was motivated by the nature and more specifically the status of the works they contained. Book production in Anglo-Saxon Britain took place largely, though not exclusively, in religious centres (like those of Kells, Lindisfarne and Durrow) which meant that texts of a more spiritual nature predominated in this period. The Lindisfarne Gospels, as a collection of such texts, exhibits both an intricate decorative programme as well as an extensive textual apparatus, which sees an expansion of practices for identifying and/or distinguishing a work. Alongside rubricated *incipit* and *explicit* forms of identification, the manuscript’s textual divisions are marked by

¹¹² Michelle P. Brown, *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms* (London: British Library, 1994), p. 74.

¹¹³ Not all insular manuscripts bore such lavish decorative programmes, but their practices (and particularly their *incipits/explicitis*, enlarged decorative initials and *incipit* pages) were replicable in plainer volumes as British Library manuscripts Harley 3063 (a late eighth-/early ninth-century commentary on Paul’s shorter epistles), Additional 11880 (a ninth-century Latin martyrology), and Cotton Tiberius A. xiv (an eighth-century copy of Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*) demonstrate.

full-page miniatures, carpet pages, and *incipit* pages (as well as canon tables and pages of prefatory material).¹¹⁴

Illuminated manuscripts are often lauded for their visual appeal in critical circles. Only recently, with the meticulous research of specialists like Michelle P. Brown and Christopher de Hamel, has their functionality come under more sustained scrutiny. For instance, the lack of text on a carpet page is normally seen to strip it of any practical value; yet they are used in the Lindisfarne (as they are elsewhere) to separate the gospels and to more specifically visually emphasize their beginnings, which suggests they were at once structural and decorative. Similarly, the Lindisfarne's series of full-page miniatures has a purpose beyond pure ornamentation. Like the carpet pages which they precede, the images mark one gospel from another, but they achieve this distinction through an illustration rather than a pattern. As each illumination depicts one of the four evangelists – Matthew, Mark, Luke or John – with his traditional symbol – man/angel, lion, ox, eagle – the miniatures also serve to identify the particular gospel which follows. The Lindisfarne's miniatures inform the reader not just that a new text begins but the identity of exactly which text is beginning.

Such features are, in accordance with this thesis's definition, forms of titling practice: they are images that distinguish and identify the text through separative and descriptive means. But, as with the ancient roll, there is no sign of the title, in the sense of a pithy, fixed, discrete name of a work, in early medieval codices. Surviving medieval booklists, inventories and catalogues show that there was no set method for identifying manuscript books at this time. Indeed, there is very little consistency in the identification of texts, which is why both later medieval and modern scholars often draw on the opening words of a manuscript, as did

¹¹⁴ For a full description of the Lindisfarne Gospels manuscript (and a number of the other insular gospel-books discussed in this section), see George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells: The Insular Gospel-books, 650-800* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987).

the ancients, for referencing purposes.¹¹⁵ Lawrence S. Guthrie II, for instance, has shown that identification through the opening words of a manuscript was ‘common after 1200’ and became especially prevalent ‘in the early fourteenth century’.¹¹⁶ The importance accorded to the first words of a work in early medieval Britain is borne out by the *incipit* pages found in many insular books.¹¹⁷ In the Lindisfarne, large illuminated initials, display capitals and decorative borders mark out the opening words of major textual divisions. These *incipit* pages are at once referencing tools (aiding the reader’s identification of a work or a specific section of a work), decorative elements (highlighting the status of that work or section), and navigational devices (helping the reader find his/her way through the work and/or entire manuscript).

The new format of the codex brought with it a new paratextual agenda. Where the roll had been an object of knowledge and status, the codex also became in certain contexts an object of worship, beauty and utility. Myriad devices, some decorative, some more practical, were created and developed to accommodate the different uses of a book. Practices of titling (that is, practices used to distinguish works), in particular, multiplied as the need to differentiate between texts became more pressing. In fact, the goal of the fully navigable book took many more centuries to attain, and so many of the paratextual features found in late antique/early medieval books continue to be important elements in the production of literature throughout the Middle Ages, both in Latin and in later vernacular manuscripts. However, the earliest transcriptions of the English vernacular problematize any idea of the development of titling practices as a linear, progressive process. Comparisons of the *mise-en-page* of Latin and Old English books show that many of the techniques of the former,

¹¹⁵ A number of studies by modern scholars attest to the importance of the work’s first words as an identificatory device in both the premodern and modern periods: see Bloomfield, *Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, 1100-1500 AD* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1979), p. 1; Sharpe, *Titulus*, pp. 45-59.

¹¹⁶ Lawrence S. Guthrie II, ‘An Overview of Medieval Library Cataloging’, *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly*, 15 (1992), 93-100 (p. 95).

¹¹⁷ Other examples of *incipit* pages can be found in the Vespasian Psalter, the Book of Durrow, the Hereford Gospels (Hereford Cathedral Library, P. I. 2) and the Book of Kells.

especially its methods for differentiating and/or identifying works, did not carry over into the extant manuscripts of the latter. Rather than circumvent the paucity of titling practices in early vernacular manuscripts, sidelining it as an inexplicable but intriguing anomaly within the overall history of the title, this chapter concludes with an exploration of the possible reasons for this absence.

The Old English codex, therefore, represents another point of beginning for a diachronic account of English titling practices – or rather beginnings, since there is no single line of development. Most, if not all, of these developments are implicated in the statuses and uses of the English vernacular throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. During the opening centuries of the Middle Ages, Old English did not have status as a written language. So while some examples of Latin to Old English translation date from the eighth century (the copy of Caedmon's *Hymn* on folio 107 recto of the Saint Petersburg Bede (Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, lat. Q. v. I. 18) or the interlinear Old English from the Lindisfarne Gospels), Old English did not achieve official written status until the final years of King Alfred's reign (871-99), when it became a necessary part of his plan to re-galvanize education in England. The principal objective of this learning programme was, in Alfred's own words, to 'translate certain books which are most necessary for all men to know into the language that we can all understand ('ðæt we aec sumæ bec, ða ðe niedbeðearfosta sien eallum monnum to wiotonne, ðæt we ða on ðæt geðiode wenden ðe we ealle gecnawen mægen').¹¹⁸ Though the texts of the work might be translated 'sometimes word for word, sometimes in a paraphrase' ('hwilum word be worde, hwilum andgit of andgiete', l. 47), the layouts of the Latin exemplars were rarely replicated in full.

¹¹⁸ Alfred the Great, 'Preface to Gregory's *Pastoral Care*', in *Old and Middle English: An Anthology*, ed. Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 10-13 (ll. 37-8). All further references are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated. This thesis uses both the original Old English text and the Modern English translation provided by this edition.

The Latin and Old English treatments of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* permit some pointed contrasts here. The Tiberius Bede (London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius C. ii), a Latin manuscript from the second half of the eighth century, displays an impressive *mise-en-page*, both in decorative and practical terms, including decorated initials which incorporate animals and interlace forms as well as a series of rubricated *incipit*-style headings. Given that it is one of two manuscripts (the other of which is Kassel, Landesbibliothek, 4° Theol 2) which transmit the 'C text' from which all later English copies derive, it might be assumed that its layout would also be adopted, and in the case of the *incipit*-headings, translated.¹¹⁹ This is not the case. Although an illuminated manuscript, the earliest Old English translation of the *Historia ecclesiastica* in the Tanner Bede (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tanner 10) of the mid-tenth century is not a *de luxe* production. It exhibits a much more modest, variable and unfinished decorative schema mainly comprising of zoomorphic initials and display script, and, although it includes a number of *incipit*-style headings, these are not recast in the vernacular.¹²⁰ In view of the overall reduction and simplification of the Latin exemplar(s) *mise-en-page* in the Tanner Bede, the failure to translate the *incipit*-headings is surprising and is discussed in more detail below.

The slightly later Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 279 manuscript of the early eleventh century draws a much sharper contrast with the Tiberius Bede. Decorative and practical features are at a minimum in this plainer production: the text is transcribed more or less continuously with only enlarged brown or red capitals either situated in, or overlapping into, the left-hand margin to signal significant divisions. While these initials (and those of the poetic manuscripts considered below) could be seen to constitute a form of titling practice under the inclusive definition of this thesis (they distinguish a work or division of it through

¹¹⁹ Further support for this idea is found in Richard Gameson, 'The Decoration of the Tanner Bede', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 21 (1992), 115-59 (p. 118). Gameson notes that the presence of a square miniscule script confirms that the Tiberius Bede 'was still being consulted in the mid-tenth century'.

¹²⁰ For an example, see fol. 68^r. For a thorough study of the decorative aspects of the Tanner Bede, see Gameson, 'Decoration of the Tanner'.

separation), it is important to ask why, after the expansion of titling practices in Latin manuscripts, do they suddenly narrow in vernacular books? That many Old English manuscripts fail to reproduce the highly visual *mise-en-page* of their Latin exemplars suggests that the various decorative and practical features developed for the Latin book, and the types of information encoded within them, proved inappropriate or even perhaps unimportant in the vernacular codex.

A possible reason for this lack of transference is suggested in Alfred's *Preface* to Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*. The main drive of Alfred's programme of Latin to English translation is to render the works and the knowledge they contain accessible to a wider audience. But, for Alfred, translating the text is just one part of this process as translators must

also arrange it, as with God's help we very easily can if we have peace, so that all the young freeborn men now among the English people, who have the means to be able to devote themselves to it, may be set to study for as long as they are of no other use, until the time they are able to read English writing well.

ond gedon, swæ we swiðe eaðe magon mid Godes fultume, gif we ða stilnesse habbað, ðætte eall sio gioguð ðe nu is on Angelcynne friora monna, ðara ðe ða speda hæbben ðæt hie ðæm befeolan mægen, sien to liornunga oðfæste, ða hwile ðe hie to nanre oðerre note ne mægen, oð ðone first ðe hie wel cunnen Englisc gewrit arædan.

(ll. 38-40)

In accordance with Alfred's translation policy, the translator is also responsible for the order of the work they translate. Acts of Alfredian translation, therefore, extend to the arrangement of the Latin text: both its internal ordering (*ordinatio*) and its physical presentation. The form of the 'most necessary' (ll. 37-8) works, as well as their language, must be altered so that 'all the young freeborn men [...] may be set to *study*' (l. 40) them. If the goal was to make these vernacular translations understandable (*gecnawen*) tools for learning (*liornunga*), then it is probable that the most desirable format was the text in its simplest, unadorned form: the text by itself. Returning to the case of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* here, George Molyneaux

notes that '[t]he most striking change' in Old English versions of its *Preface* 'is the addition of references to teaching.'¹²¹ Where in the Latin the narrator encourages Ceolwulf to study and copy the work, in the vernacular translation he stipulates that Ceolwulf should also teach (*læranne*) it.¹²² The need for accessible, comprehensible teaching texts might go some way towards explaining the less elaborate layouts of the Tanner Bede and Corpus Christi College, 279 manuscripts. What it does not explain, however, is the much sparser *mise-en-page* of Old English poetry.

In three out of the four major vernacular poetic manuscripts – the Exeter Book (Exeter, Cathedral Library, 3501) of the 930s, the Vercelli Book (Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS C. xvii) of the later tenth century, and the Nowell Codex (London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A. xv) of the early eleventh century – enlarged initials at the beginning of lines and/or *litterae notabiliores* (marking the opening words of the work and/or the words *FINIT* or *AMEN* at its end) in black ink and the spaces left between units of text constitute the only prominent and consistent visual features. There is no attempt to distinguish verse: text, in the manner of prose, runs across the page continuously from left to right. There are no word divisions, indications of smaller textual units are hazy and punctuation (commonly through point or *punctus versus*) is inconsistent and, in most cases, light. A number of Latin *incipit*-style headings mark out some of the Vercelli Book's homilies (*incipit narrare miracula*, for instance, marks the beginning of the sixth) but these are inconsistent. In the transcription of Old English poetry it seems that decorative and practical features are virtually non-existent. An exception here is the Junius manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11) of the early eleventh century. The Junius contains an unfinished series of line drawings, portraying events which occur within the works. Roman numerals also mark out textual divisions in the first part (containing New Testament material

¹²¹ George Molyneaux, 'The *Old English Bede*: English Ideology or Christian Instruction?', *English Historical Review*, 124 (2009), 1289-323 (p. 1307).

¹²² For helpful comparative tables, see Molyneaux, 'The *Old English Bede*', pp. 1309-10.

and *Christ and Satan*). As it is the latest of the major Old English poetic codices, the attempt to replicate the more elaborate layout of Latin books is not overly surprising; the fact that the programme of illustration remains incomplete, however, might suggest something about the overall viability or importance of the project.

While there is a partial imitation of the Latin *mise-en-page* in the presentation of Latin to Old English translations, there is only trace evidence of its influence on the layout of original poetic compositions in the vernacular. This suggests there may be a further reason (beyond the need for accessible, teachable texts) for this lack of transference. Reconsideration of the Tanner Bede's untranslated Latin *incipits* and *explicitis* uncovers another possible explanation. Their consistent Latin form discounts scribal oversight and the roughly contemporary Old English interlinear translations of the Lindisfarne Gospels, which translate *incipit* as *onginned* and *explicit* as *asægd is*, indicate that these headings could be rendered in the vernacular. Instead, the failure to vernacularize the Latin headings of the exemplar(s) seems to suggest that the feature itself did not translate onto the vernacular page. That is, the scribe, by choosing not to translate the headings, by retaining them in their original Latin form, marks the offset *incipit/explicit* as a specifically Latin (para)textual device. This part of the chapter has already shown how visual reading aids for distinguishing and identifying texts had been (and still were) developing for centuries, so what was it that inhibited their application in Old English manuscripts?

The (para)textual apparatus of early medieval Latin books is the product of a long-established textual culture. Its various features were designed to explicate and accommodate highly literate compositions and, as a consequence, they have specific relevance to them. The earliest surviving manuscript records of Old English literature, on the other hand, are datable

to the 730s.¹²³ Vernacular literature before (and still for a long time after) this date was composed orally and relied on the memory for its preservation. Given their immediate oral roots, the transcriptions of vernacular compositions display high residual orality. The transitional oral-literate status of Old English texts, what Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe refers to in her influential reappraisal of the orality-literacy debate as 'transitional literacy', problematizes direct replication of the primarily literate Latin *mise-en-page*.¹²⁴ Contemporaneous Latin manuscripts employ a constantly evolving set of visual cues (lineation, capitalization, illustration, offset *incipits* and *explicitis*) to guide readers through the literate text(s) they contain.¹²⁵ For early English vernacular texts straddling the boundary between oral and literate states, this kind of purely literate (para)textual system, composed of primarily graphic indicators, would have been both unsuitable and wholly inadequate.

Old English poetry, which was originally composed to be recited and heard, would have demanded verbal, as opposed to visual, signposting.¹²⁶ Once transcribed, however, once the work was given form and spatialized upon the manuscript page, these verbal cues joined with a number of visual markers (capitals, enlarged initials, and pointing were among some of the first) derived from the Latin *mise-en-page*. Through a combination of visual and verbal devices, English began to develop its own conventions for presenting literary works and this was a process which continued, as the next chapter argues, throughout the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. The beginnings of a vernacular form of textual presentation carries

¹²³ A vernacular transcription of Caedmon's *Hymn* is included as part of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* in the Saint Petersburg Bede and Cambridge, University Library, Kk. V. 16 manuscripts.

¹²⁴ Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1990), p. 21. Five years later, Carol Braun Pasternack uses the word 'inscribed' to refer to texts situated transitionally between oral and literate states: see Carol Braun Pasternack, *The Textuality of Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 8. For a variety of essays tackling the orality-literacy debate, see A. N. Doane and Carol Braun Pasternack, ed., *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages* (London and Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

¹²⁵ O'Keefe, *Visible Song*, p. 3. O'Keefe's study focuses on Old English verse; however, given the absence or limited amount of visual information both prose and verse, this thesis extends her arguments to the generality of Old English manuscripts.

¹²⁶ Pasternack undertakes a detailed chapter-length study of verbal and visual clues in Old English poetry in: Pasternack, *Textuality*, pp. 147-200.

with it another, perhaps more fundamental reason for the partial, simplified, and inconsistent replication of the Latin style of layout in Old English poetic compositions.

What does not appear to have been part of this burgeoning vernacular *mise-en-page*, at least initially, is any external, visual form of titling practice. The inclusion of offset *incipits/explicits* or illustrations, which often serve to identify or describe works in Latin manuscripts, are seldom visible. Indeed, the majority of Old English poetry is entirely anonymous: the ascription of authorial and textual names is extremely rare. Old English poetry, its communal (re)composition, its multiformity, and its unstable textual existence, did not support the concept of a single, identifiable composer (an author) or of a single, fixed textual identity (a title); naming, the act of fixing identity, therefore, was not a necessary element in the production (whether oral or written) of early vernacular poetry.

As Old English poetry was initially orally composed (and later transcribed) for recital, it is conceivable that the identification of or at least the distinction between individual poems in a performance would have been indicated verbally as part of the composition. In *The Textuality of Old English*, Carol Braun Pasternack shows how conventional verbal patterns are used to distinguish the beginnings and endings of Old English poems. She argues that while '[b]eginnings, by convention, connect the audience to the text with references to shared knowledge', the endings of Old English poems 'typically break time, moving beyond the narrative and the specifics of any situation in the world into universality and eternity.'¹²⁷ For Pasternack, these verbal indications act alongside visual cues to guide readers/listeners through vernacular compositions. To extend Pasternack's argument a little further here, it seems likely that the presence of various verbal clues in vernacular transcriptions rendered some of the earlier Latin-derived visual devices, and particularly the introductory *incipits* (and more occasionally *explicitis*) redundant. Indeed, a verbal alternative to these headings is

¹²⁷ Pasternack, *Textuality*, pp. 151, 155.

found in the descriptive introductions which preface a number of extant Old English poems.

The poem now known by the title *The Whale*, for instance, begins:

Nu Ic fitte gen ymb fiscal cynn
wille woðecræfte wordum cyþan
þurh modgemynd bi þam miclan hwale.

Now, in a song about a species of fish,
I will relate in words with the art of speech
consistent with my thoughts, about the great whale ¹²⁸

These opening lines describe both the mode and the content of the poem to the reader/listener. As this opening is vocalized (whether in a private or more public setting), it conveys vital information, that this is ‘a song about a species of fish’ (l. 1) and, more specifically, ‘about the great whale’ (l. 3), to aid the reader/listener in her/his recognition, differentiation, identification and/or remembrance of the poem. A slightly more extensive introduction forms the beginning of the poem now known as *The Wife’s Lament*:

Ic þis giedd wrece bi me ful geomorre,
minre sylfre sið. Ic þæt secgan mæg,
hwæt Ic yrmþa gebad siþþan Ic up weox,
niwes oþþe ealdes, no ma þonne nu.

I relate this very mournful riddle about myself,
about my own journey. I am able to relate
those miseries that I endured since I grew up,
of new and old ones, never more than now. ¹²⁹

As the first lines of *The Wife’s Lament* are read aloud the reader/listener learns its genre (it is ‘a very mournful riddle’ (l. 1)) and its subject-matter (it is about the narrator’s ‘own journey’ (l. 2) of ‘miseries’ (l. 3)). These opening lines also provide a brief synopsis of the poem (it will relate all the narrator’s misfortunes, both ‘new and old’ (l. 4)). Through the vocalization of this introductory opening, the reader/listener is supplied with information that may help

¹²⁸ *The Whale*, in Treharne, *Old and Middle English*, pp. 54-9 (ll. 1-3). All further references are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated. This thesis uses both the original Old English text and the Modern English translation provided by this edition

¹²⁹ *The Wife’s Lament*, in Treharne, *Old and Middle English*, pp. 76-9 (ll. 1-4). All further references are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated. This thesis uses both the original Old English text and the Modern English translation provided by this edition

her/him to recognize, differentiate, identify and/or remember the poem, but s/he is also given details which encourage her/him to anticipate and/or follow its progression. In these particular instances, the addition of external identificatory or separative headings would have been unnecessary (or, at any rate, less necessary) as the words of the text itself would fulfil these (and further) functions.

Verbal descriptions incorporated into the beginnings (and/or endings) of transitional oral-literate Old English poems may have offered sufficient differentiation and identification, at least initially, for medieval readers/listeners. The reception of compositions (whether written down or not) was predominantly aural in the early Middle Ages and in such performative settings the recitation of an internal verbal preamble to aid the aural reception of a work seems more appropriate than the recitation of an external (and disconnected) verbal *incipit/explicit*. Not all Old English poems contain these verbal prefaces, but it is possible that many did not survive the change of textual context: that is, the shift from stage (recitation) to page (transcription). Standard practice or not, these internal descriptions constitute a specifically vernacular and orally-derived form of titling; indeed, they constitute a distinctive premodern practice, the functionality of which increases throughout the post-Conquest period, for which modern ideas of the title have no relevance or use.

When considered in terms of modern concepts of the title, many of the practices discussed in this section would be (and indeed regularly are) overlooked and, as a consequence, vital phases in the development of titling practice are obscured. The wider parameters of the definition proposed by this thesis, however – which defines a titling practice as anything (whether sign, symbol, word, image, or other) that serves to distinguish and/or identify (through separation, description, designation, or other method) a literary work – allows the numerous and differing premodern practices for distinguishing and/or identifying texts to be taken into account. In order to achieve a fuller, more sympathetic

account of the title's prehistory it is necessary to adjust, broaden and sometimes abandon altogether modern ideas of what a title should be. In view of this, the final chapters of the thesis move away from the modern idea of the title, and its attendant assumptions and expectations, and instead concentrate on the various titling practices of manuscripts produced in England in the later medieval period. While the majority of the practices discussed in this chapter continue to be important in the production and reading of books in the centuries following the Norman Conquest, the development of titling continues along multiple, sporadic, non-linear and at times obscure routes.

4 Medieval Titling: Post-Conquest into the Thirteenth Century

The preceding discussion of the premodern meanings and uses of the word *title* (and its roots) suggests that the modern idea of the literary title as a single, brief, exclusive, concise, descriptive name of a work and associated particularly with the cover or title page had relatively little currency. Yet traces of modern meanings are discernible in the intersections of descriptive, designative and claimative senses throughout its semantic development. A similar doubling of findings is evident in the latter part of the chapter, as the examination of some of the earliest extant methods for distinguishing and identifying literary compositions indicates that the modern title – in its external, self-contained, short, designative, fixed form – did not exist in premodernity. But while the *sillyboi*, *tituli*, *epigrammata*, *litterae notabiliores*, rubricated *incipits/explicits*, illuminated initials, and miniatures of premodern texts do not exactly equate with the modern title, they do all possess functions which have come to be associated with it. Premodern ideas about and methods for differentiating and identifying texts, then, can be said to simultaneously correspond and conflict with modern practices and concepts of titling.

The application of the word *title*, with its complex of assumptions, set principles and expectations, to early practices effectively overwrites any of their differences: it assimilates them, recognizing all that tallies with the modern title and ignoring anything that does not. Equally, however, the adoption of another, seemingly more appropriate, word (*tituli*, *incipit*, inscription, rubric or similar) to describe these premodern practices only serves to erase any of the similarities of function, form and/or meaning that they might have with the modern title; thus, any continuities between the modern and premodern practices are marginalized, as is the idea of the gradual development of titling over time. Moreover, the selection of a single term, whether *title*, *incipit*, rubric or other, fails to encompass the wide range of early titling

practices: it reduces the multiple to the singular, the heterogeneous to the homogeneous, the unfixed to the fixed.

The idea that a single element of the manuscript page can be considered in isolation from all others is itself acutely problematic. It is evident from the previous chapter's discussion of medieval Latin and Old English titling practices, that a variety of presentational features, including decorated initials, spacing, *litterae notabiliores* and rubricated headings, often work in conjunction with one another to distinguish and/or identify texts. Not only are many aspects of the manuscript page interdependent, there is also a degree of fluidity in their conception, so that it is hard, for example, to pin down exactly what an *incipit/explicit* is and how it differs from other types of manuscript heading or to be certain of the distinction now made between historiated initials and miniatures. The interconnectedness of features of the manuscript page, their indivisibility from each other and the particular expansiveness of what this thesis chooses to call 'titling practices' becomes ever more apparent in the discussion which follows.

It is, then, precisely the similarity and disparity of premodern and modern practices of titling, as well as the overall variety and fluidity of premodern practices, that the thesis tries to capture in its phrase 'titling practices'. 'Titling' ensures sufficient specificity as it applies to all those practices that differentiate and identify works, while 'practices' makes the phrase flexible enough to encompass the multitudinous ways of doing so in the premodern period. It allows consideration of visual *and* verbal, textual *and* paratextual, decorative *and* practical, internal *and* external, fixed *and* unfixed ways of differentiating and identifying literary compositions. In short, the phrase enables the diverse methods for separating, differentiating, describing, designating or otherwise identifying premodern literary works to be considered together as well as on and within their own terms and, as the focus shifts from the diachronic

overview of the last chapter to the mixture of synchronic and diachronic considerations in the chapters which follow, it is one the thesis continues to use.

Up until now, the thesis has explored the prehistory of the title through a general survey of the earliest titling practices, stretching from antiquity through to the early Middle Ages. This chapter, in an attempt to achieve an even more unified form of what Paul Strohm calls ‘project-oriented’ theory, begins to narrow the broader diachronic scope of chapter three as it supplements more general observations on the literary titling practices of medieval England with more detailed considerations of individual manuscript books and specific works dating from the late eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the growing variety of titling practices contained within them.¹ The discussion is in two parts. The first considers ‘external titling practices’: that is, those practices of titling which occur outside or on the boundaries of texts (where the modern reader is conditioned to seek and find titles). These paratextual forms include many of the verbal and non-verbal titling practices discussed in preceding chapters, including *litterae notabiliores*, illuminated initials, the use of spacing, and offset *incipits/explicits*. The second section looks at what can be called ‘internal titling practices’ which encompass those titling practices that occur within the text itself. Such textual forms are usually found within the opening and closing sections of a work and generally tend to be descriptive or more occasionally designative. The thesis acknowledges that the line between the two forms of titling practice is not always distinct and this problem is taken up in the next chapter. For now differentiating internal and external practices suffices for the present discussion.

¹ Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. xi.

4.1 External Titling: Continuity and Disruption

4.1.1 Continuing with Convention

According to the standard periodization of English literary history, the use of standard West Saxon in written records ceases abruptly following the Norman Conquest of 1066. From the beginning of the thirteenth century Middle English writings survive in increasing numbers. Examples are the *Poema Morale*, *Ancrene Wisse*, Layamon's *Brut* and *The Owl and the Nightingale*. This widely accepted chronology, however, leaves over a century's worth of vernacular textual production relatively unaccounted for. Elaine Treharne is one of the few scholars to both acknowledge and address this lacuna. In a recent article, she reasons that

[p]art of the refusal of academia to engage with this complex period in English literary history – with anything other than a nod in the direction of the few vernacular survivals – come from its texts' obvious lack of potential for classification. The textual material written from 1060 to 1215, which is based, for the most part, on earlier exemplars, does not fall into any of our constructed periods: it is neither 'Old English', because it was not created at the time to which Old English properly belongs; nor is it 'Middle', because it does not illustrate the right amount of linguistic change.²

Much like the obfuscation of the title's prehistory in modern titology, Treharne argues that the elision of vernacular texts produced in the hundred and fifty years after the Conquest within English literary studies occurs as a result of the definitions, categories and boundaries created by and for modern readerships. In addition to their transitional linguistic status as neither Old nor Middle English, vernacular post-Conquest texts also refuse modern classification as they fail to correspond with any recognized idea of what a literary work should be: only a small number are what might be called original compositions, the intended audiences and purposes of most remain obscure, and the (re)composition and presentation of many reflect a complex and sometimes confusing amalgamation of traditions.

² Elaine Treharne, 'Categorization, Periodization: The Silence of (the) English in the Twelfth Century', in *New Medieval Literatures*, ed. Rita Copeland, David Lawton and Wendy Scase (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), VIII. 247-73 (p. 250). Also see Treharne's and Mary Swan's earlier collection of essays: Swan and Treharne, ed., *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Late eleventh- and twelfth-century writings are also represented well in Treharne's anthology of Old and Middle English compositions: see Treharne, ed., *Old and Middle English: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

The indefinable quality of post-Conquest English literature leads some scholars to write it out of their considerations of medieval literature and literary history completely. Some recent instances of this include Tim William Machan's *English in the Middle Ages* in which he states that '[f]rom the 150 years after the Conquest, comparatively little English of any kind survives' and Chris McCully and Sharon Hilles's even more sweeping statement in their guide to the Old English language that '[t]hroughout the post-Conquest period, native "English" production appears to come almost to a standstill'.³ As has already been seen with titology, it is much easier, and makes for a much tidier narrative, to omit such hazy or uncertainly defined periods. The thirty or so vernacular manuscripts which survive from the late eleventh, twelfth, and early thirteenth centuries bear witness to a much more dynamic literary scene than is sometimes generally supposed.

The titling practices and indeed the wider *mise-en-page* of vernacular post-Conquest texts are yet to receive thorough examination. This period may well represent a slowing down or shift in terms of the production and presentation of English literature as well as its creative development, as there is little evidence in the way of progression for both, but, as Treharne demonstrates, this moment of apparent stasis and possible change warrants more than critical disregard and/or denial. And, indeed, closer consideration of it from the perspective of titling practices reveals an interestingly complicated scenario.

In the years following the Conquest, the forms that vernacular texts take can be seen to reflect (as they did in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period) the changing statuses and uses of the English language. After the events of 1066, French supplanted English as the official language of the monarchy, while Latin continued as the language of learning and religion. Though Norman aristocrats and churchmen show interest in England's history, saints and

³ Tim William Machan, *English in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 37; Chris McCully and Sharon Hilles, *The Earliest English: An Introduction to Old English Language* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), p. 257. Treharne cites a variety of similar statements throughout her article: see Treharne, 'Categorization, Periodization'.

literary heritage, that often takes the form of texts written in Anglo-Norman, such as Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* or the *La vie Seynte Audree* and *La passion de seint Edmund*, behind these there are usually sources in both Latin and Old English. The decline in the use of English for official documents and learned works and the removal of the official impetus, for vernacular writing certainly limited the amount and range of English writing produced thereafter, but it by no means eradicated them. Because much post-Conquest English writing consists of copies and adaptations of earlier Old English material, it is easy to see it as archaic, conventional and retrograde. The forms of these texts, their physical presentation on the manuscript page, something rarely considered, seems to show similar continuity. By and large, vernacular transcriptions from the late eleventh century and throughout the course of the twelfth can be seen to exhibit comparable layouts to that of the Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 279 manuscript of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* considered in chapter three. Written text tends to run across the page in a continuous, single column format, while decorative features are usually at a minimum and when they are included they are usually simple in style.

The decorative continuity between pre- and post-Conquest vernacular manuscripts is further attested by their respective titling practices. Just as the rubricated headings for the Old English translation of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* remain in the original Latin in the mid-tenth-century Tanner Bede (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tanner 10) manuscript, many of the manuscripts transcribed around the time of the Conquest retain Latin headings.⁴ This is particularly true of the English homiletic compilations of the period: a high proportion of which, including Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 303, a manuscript of

⁴ The thesis is indebted to the research of N. R Ker for many of the observations regarding the different headings and general *mise-en-page* of post-Conquest manuscripts in the pages that follow: see Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957). These observations have been supplemented, where possible, through consultation of the online database now available from the University of Leicester: see *The Production and Uses of English Manuscripts, 1060 to 1220*, ed. Takako Kato (2008). Available at: <http://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/index.html> [accessed 15 April 2010].

homiletic material datable to the middle decades of the twelfth century, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 343, a large collection of homilies from the latter half of the twelfth century, exhibit more or less complete programmes of rubricated Latin headings, as do their tenth- and early eleventh-century predecessors.⁵ Other manuscripts datable to the post-Conquest period, on the other hand, appear to rely on a variety of non-verbal decorative features, such as illuminated initials, *litterae notabiliores* and spacing, to distinguish one text from another. Mimicking the general trend in pre-Conquest gospel manuscripts, many of those written after the Conquest depend on aspects of layout to differentiate the individual texts.⁶ There are no external headings in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 38, a late twelfth-/early thirteenth-century gospel manuscript, for instance; however, each initial letter is coloured in alternating red and blue, while larger initials, which are also rendered in a third, green colouring, mark the beginning of each gospel.⁷ A similar layout is evident in London, British Library, Royal 1 A. xiv, although the colour scheme is red and green.⁸ Furthermore, spacing performs a differentiating function in both manuscripts as each gospel begins on a new quire. Seemingly, then, there is little variation in vernacular titling practice before and after the Conquest; yet, considering that many of the later texts are reproductions of pre-Conquest material, this sort of replication is perhaps to be expected. However, the contents and forms of vernacular post-Conquest manuscripts may not be as backward-looking and conservative as they initially seem.

⁵ For early homiletic parallels, see the late tenth-century London, British Library, Royal 7 C. xii, the late tenth-/early eleventh-century London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius C. v and the early eleventh-century Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 188 manuscripts. All exhibit complete programmes of rubricated Latin headings.

⁶ Some examples of earlier, layout-dependant gospel manuscripts include the Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 441 manuscript (from which Hatton 38 derives) and the first volume of the London, British Library, Cotton Otho C. i manuscript, both datable to the first half of the eleventh century. Each of these manuscripts has a similar layout to that found in later post-Conquest manuscripts (particularly Bodley 441).

⁷ The running titles and chapter numbers that appear in this manuscript have been added by a sixteenth-century hand: see Ker, *Catalogue*, p. 387.

⁸ It must be noted that a general heading for the gospels, *Textus IIII ewangeliorum 'anglice'*, occurs on f. 3 of Royal 1 A. xiv, but no other headings are employed to distinguish the individual texts.

4.1.2 Progressing with Innovation

Although vernacular textual production in the years after the Conquest appears to centre on the reproduction of earlier Old English material, this does not necessarily indicate a regression or stagnation of literary creation. The subordination of the written English language in this period is undeniable (at least where the extant written records are concerned), but, as Mary Swan and Treharne point out, the idea that acts of recopying or adaptation constitute uncreative and inferior forms of literature has its basis in the modern valorization and privileging of originality that is itself a ‘product of a twentieth-century print-culture mentality’.⁹ Yet, as many medievalists, following the work of Paul Zumthor and Bernard Cerquiglini, now recognize, the conditions of literary composition and manuscript production in the Middle Ages do not support such a simple contrast between original and adaptive compositions.¹⁰ Every manuscript (and in later centuries early print) copy of a work bears witness to a certain literary milieu, a certain combination of circumstances that produced it and which impact upon both its content and form. It is possible to see each transcription, therefore, as a text in its own right. The proliferation of copies and adaptations of pre-Conquest English compositions in the hundred and fifty years after the Conquest, then, can be re-evaluated as (re)creative rather than purely repetitive compositions. Their reworking of older material figures them at once as progressive *and* nostalgic literary constructions.¹¹ Treharne’s contention and the complex historical situation it deals with between 1066 and c. 1100, has implications, discussed below, for the development of titling practices.

⁹ Swan and Treharne, ‘Introduction’, in *Rewriting Old English*, pp. 1-10 (p. 7). Also see Treharne’s discussion of originality, and its potential to mislead with respect to medieval literature, in Treharne, ‘Categorization, Periodization’, pp. 250-3.

¹⁰ See Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Philip Bennett (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1992); Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, trans. Betsy Wing (London and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). These works are among two of the most influential to consider the fluidity or *mouvance*, to use Zumthor’s term, or *variance*, to use Cerquiglini’s, of medieval works.

¹¹ The idea that twelfth-century writers recreated and adapted the earlier Old English material they copied is the central theme of Swan and Treharne’s essay collection *Rewriting Old English*.

The physical forms of post-Conquest English literature warrant similar reappraisal. If these productions do not merely replicate the contents of their exemplars but instead adapt and recompose them, then it is more than likely that their forms, their presentation on the manuscript page, will have been modified too. Beyond the similarities already noted, there are in fact several important differences in the layout of vernacular texts before and after the Conquest. There are, for example, few vernacular manuscripts on the scale of the earlier Tanner Bede, which boasts a modest but ultimately unfinished decorative schema, and no examples of what might be called *de luxe* volumes in English (as there are in Latin and, later in the thirteenth century, in French) at all from this period.¹² Indeed, it appears that decoration, of the ornamental variety, did not feature so prominently in the layout of post-Conquest English texts. As a consequence, many of the visually appealing, non-verbal titling practices adopted and adapted from Latin for the vernacular in the ninth, tenth and early eleventh centuries either fail to present in late eleventh- and twelfth-century transcriptions (ornate decorated initials, for example) or they appear in a much more simplified form (the moderate use of display script and *litterae notabiliores*, for instance).¹³ The non-verbal devices for distinguishing and/or identifying separate texts and textual divisions which are included in these manuscripts, then, appear to serve more practical than ornamental purposes. It seems that rather than directly replicating previous practices, the *mise-en-page* of English texts undergoes further reduction and simplification in the century or so after the Conquest.

¹² Treharne also notes the absence of expensive, luxurious vernacular manuscripts in this period, see Treharne, 'Categorization, Periodization', p. 261. Many of the Latin manuscripts considered in the previous chapter 'Meaning and Early Practices' might be considered *de luxe* productions. Nottingham, University Library, WLC/LM/6, a collection of seven romances and ten fabliaux which is illustrated with eighty-three miniatures, is one early thirteenth-century example of what could be described as a *de luxe* French, and notably secular, manuscript.

¹³ Plainer styles of decorated initials are found in the London, British Library, Faustina A. ix, the Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 116, and the Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 303 manuscripts, and for several more decorative examples, see the Cotton Vespasian D. xiv manuscript. Modest display script is visible in the rubrics of the Faustina A. ix manuscript, while simple forms of *litterae notabiliores* are evident across the post-Conquest manuscripts: some notable examples include the Faustina A. ix and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 302 manuscripts.

It is possible to perceive the apparent downsizing of the English manuscript page as a reflection of the English language's diminished status, in official, monastic and aristocratic life, in the years following 1066. The transcription of vernacular texts appears to have been a subsidiary occupation within the monastic scriptoria which monopolized the production of manuscripts during this period; thus, the plainer, largely functional formats of post-Conquest English manuscripts might be explained by the limited time and resources that could be given over to their copying.¹⁴ But, at the same time, as Treharne observes,

none of the manuscripts [...] was carelessly produced, or produced as some kind of introduction to the art of writing: all of them show a knowledge of the latest elements of script, all of them demonstrate a reasonable handwriting proficiency, and all [but one] were corrected.¹⁵

In Treharne's view, these manuscripts, though marginal, were not the result of hurried, casual or amateur production, and the greater consistency in layout evident across these manuscripts already identified offers further support to this view. The downgrading of the vernacular *mise-en-page*, therefore, cannot be explained by scribal inattention, oversight or lack of time, and the fact that institutions chose to copy English manuscripts at all during this period counters any idea of scribal indifference. Indeed, the persistence of a plainer, simpler vernacular layout in manuscripts produced during the first century or so after the Conquest suggests its inclusion may have been more purposive than this.

The projected uses of English writings in the late eleventh, twelfth and early thirteenth centuries are indicative here. Where Latin (and later French) manuscripts, in line with the relative statuses of the languages, tend to be elite, patronized productions, the extant English manuscripts evince a humbler, more commonplace provenance and this is reflected in their respective *mise-en-pages*. In a continuation of earlier practices stemming from Alfred's originary pedagogical impetus for recording texts in English, the decorative programmes in

¹⁴ For further information on what is known about the scriptoria of the twelfth-century, see Treharne, 'The Production and Script of Manuscripts Containing English Religious Texts in the First Half of the Twelfth Century', in *Rewriting Old English*, pp. 11-40 (p. 11-2).

¹⁵ Treharne, 'Production and Script', p. 39.

post-Conquest manuscripts are mainly functional, while ornamental, augmentative (but equally practical) decorative schemas appear to be confined to Latin (and later French) productions.¹⁶ The perpetuation of similar vernacular forms (how texts are presented) and contents (what the texts are) across the pre- and post-Conquest periods distinguishes literature in English from that in Latin (and later in French). Treharne reads this doubled differentiation as an act of ‘passive resistance to Norman hegemony’, arguing that ‘English in this period [can be understood] as an attempt by its own *litterati* to create a product that is a refutation of the colonizers’ suzerainty’.¹⁷ In pursuing this argument, Treharne specifically concentrates on the contents of English manuscripts: on how the copies and adaptations of pre-Conquest material including homilies, Alfredian translations, hagiographies, gospels, laws, and so forth, establish an alternative, indigenous literature; however, only cursory consideration is given to their physical forms and the implications of them.¹⁸

It is possible, however, to take this consideration a little further beyond Treharne’s suggestions and identify in the uniformity of textual layout the beginnings of a distinctively vernacular *mise-en-page*. Rather than replicating the formats of the prevailing languages, scribes continue to present English literature after the Conquest in the same kinds of form as they did before it. Having said this, there are several signs of change. While the same single column, continuous text layout is maintained, clearer division of words and greater use of punctuation are increasingly apparent and a particular type of script, the Insular Miniscule, comes to dominate. The use of non-verbal forms of titling practice becomes more consistent as a combination of decorated initials, spacing, and *litterae notabiliores* are deployed together

¹⁶ This is not to suggest that all Latin and French productions employed these more elaborate schemas: there are large numbers of plainer productions. Rather they stand in contrast, here, to English in which language there are no elaborate productions until the later Middle Ages.

¹⁷ Treharne, ‘Categorization, Periodization’, p. 261.

¹⁸ See Treharne, ‘Production and Script’, pp. 38, 39: Treharne observes that ‘the approximate codicological uniformity’ of the vernacular *mise-en-page* at this time ‘might have resulted from a deliberate policy to produce English texts’, but this is as far as her analysis goes. For various observations regarding the presentation of vernacular texts, see Treharne, ‘Categorization and Periodization’, p. 261.

to visually distinguish and/or identify English texts and textual divisions. Such consistency is unprecedented and can be attributed to a merging of previously distinctive vernacular formats. Indeed, the prevailing form lies somewhere between the sparsity of the earlier Old English poetic codices such as the Exeter Book (Exeter, Cathedral Library, 3501) or the Nowell Codex (London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A. xv) and the imitative variability of the initial Latin to English translations, which the contrasts between the Tanner Bede and Corpus Christi College, 279 manuscripts amply demonstrate. This admixture of earlier forms, its careful and relatively precise execution, can be read as an effort to accommodate the particular demands of literature in English: as an attempt to establish a vernacular-appropriate *mise-en-page*. Read in this way, the repudiation of Latin and French formats appears more forceful than Treharne allows. The presentation of post-Conquest English texts is not just an attempt to differentiate English literature from that of Latin or French, it is also represents an attempt to institute a suitable, representative format for it.

4.1.3 Towards a Vernacular *Mise-en-page*

While the emergent vernacular *mise-en-page* can be regarded as a continuance and adaptation of a pre-Conquest (and Latin-influenced) apparatus, then, the writing of English in the century or so after 1066 can also be seen as innovative. The expansion of the vernacular presentational repertoire is especially noticeable in the changes to verbal forms of titling practice that occur during this period. Although the majority of post-Conquest manuscripts which contain English homilies have comprehensive sets of (usually rubricated) Latin headings, the use of substitutive or supplementary English headings is increasingly evident. This is not to suggest that the practice of giving vernacular headings to vernacular texts is not evident in earlier Anglo-Saxon manuscripts but rather that across the manuscripts of the late

eleventh, twelfth and early thirteenth centuries such headings are becoming more common and their functions more extensive.

Vernacular headings for homilies are scarce before the eleventh century. On those rare occasions that they do head a text, as they do in the Vercelli Book (Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS C. xvii) from the latter half of the tenth century, their form tends to be short and largely generic.¹⁹ The predominance of headings composed primarily of genre indications continues into the eleventh century. The English headings in both Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 419 (of the first half of the eleventh century) and MS 421 (dated from the beginning to the third quarter of the eleventh century) are mainly generic, with most including (and many consisting solely of) the word 'Larspel'. In the mid-eleventh-century London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius A. iii manuscript, the English headings, which tend to mark its shorter items, are formulaic in the extreme: ten of the twelve brief homiletic pieces are headed with a version of the phrase 'To eallen folke', an almost generic heading marking out a particular kind of sermon, while most of this manuscript's other vernacular headings are prepositional phrases, the majority of which begin with *be*, as in 'Be misdæda' or 'Be dædbotum', replicating the common Latin heading which begins *de*.²⁰ Descriptive detail is at a minimum in these early vernacular headings.

After the Conquest, however, the function of vernacular headings, particularly as they appear in collections of homilies, starts to take a more descriptive direction. Take, for example, the late eleventh-/early twelfth-century Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 302 and the slightly later London, British Library, Cotton Faustina A. ix manuscripts. These codices share a similar sequence of homiletic material, the first three homilies of which are headed in

¹⁹ Other homiletic manuscripts from this early period include London, British Library, Royal 7 C. xii (a late tenth-century collection of Ælfric's *Homilies*) which has a full programme of rubricated Latin headings, and Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Gg. III. 28 (another manuscript of Ælfric's *Homilies* dating from the end of the tenth/beginning of the eleventh century), which has only Latin headings for its homiletic material.

²⁰ This grouping of brief homiletic works is item 19 in Ker's *Catalogue*: see Ker, *Catalogue*, pp. 245-6.

both Latin and English.²¹ These vernacular headings are particularly notable for their descriptiveness: ‘Be þere halgan clænnesse, be heofonwarum & beo helwarum, and Larspel be urum drihtne’.²² These English headings, through their elaboration of each homily’s subject matter, serve to supplement what is otherwise a standard Latin formula for distinguishing and identifying homiletic compositions.²³

Although English headings are occasionally present in pre-Conquest homiletic manuscripts, it is the Latin headings which predominate there.²⁴ Vernacular headings begin to occur with more frequency and in larger numbers across those manuscripts produced in the years following the Conquest. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 201, a miscellany of mainly homiletic material datable to the third quarter of the eleventh century, is the example *par excellence* here; indeed, its vernacular headings are the principal means for verbally describing and/or identifying the texts it contains.²⁵ As with the earlier manuscripts, specific forms of heading and numerous variations of them are repeated throughout, but there are also several examples of more descriptive headings: these usually replicate the Latin *incipit*-heading form as does ‘Her gebirað nu to eadgares gerædnes. be gehadodum mannum liffadunge’ or ‘Her onginneð seo gerecednes be antióche þam ungesæligan cincge & be apolonige þam [tiriscan]’.²⁶ Descriptive, indicative *incipits/explicits* like these are especially important in later thirteenth- and fourteenth-century vernacular manuscripts as the last chapter of this thesis demonstrates. Over the course of the post-Conquest period, the presence

²¹ The remainder of the headings in these manuscripts are Latin: see Ker, *Catalogue*, pp. 96-8, 190-93. There is one instance of a dual Latin and English heading (*Larspel, In capite ieiunii*) later in Corpus Christi College, MS 302 (item 17, according to Ker’s divisions): see Ker, *Catalogue*, p. 97

²² These headings are from Faustina A. ix. For the very similar headings of Corpus Christi College, MS 302 see Ker, *Catalogue*, p. 96. An ampersand is used in place of the Tironian *nota* for ‘and’ found in manuscripts throughout this thesis.

²³ The Latin headings across the Corpus Christi College, 302 and Faustina A. ix manuscripts are all variations of a ‘*Dominica* plus roman numerals’ formula.

²⁴ While many of Tiberius A. iii’s English items have Latin headings, it must be noted that a large number have no headings at all.

²⁵ There are over 20 English headings for homiletic items in this manuscript. Furthermore, a series of five legal statements carry vernacular headings, as do sixteen short political and ecclesiastical pieces which broadly correspond with Wulfstan’s *Institutes of Polity*.

²⁶ These are the headings to items 45 and 53, respectively: see Ker, *Catalogue*, pp. 87, 89. For a list of these and other headings see Ker, *Catalogue*, pp. 83-9.

and the functions of vernacular headings begin to expand and this expansion continues throughout the Middle Ages and into the early modern period.

Unlike their numbers and uses within the surviving manuscripts, the reasons for these supplementary and substitutive English headings are hard to ascertain. To demonstrate by way of example, the vernacular heading, ‘be heofonwarum & beo helwarum’, for the composite homily on the subject of Judgement day which is found in both the Corpus Christi College, 302 and the Faustina A. ix manuscripts, could result from the translation (as could the homily itself) of a Latin exemplar which is no longer extant. However, it is equally possible that this homily and its heading were the products of a new, specifically vernacular act of (re)creation. In such circumstances, a Latin heading is unlikely to be sought. If a verbal descriptive and/or identificatory heading is desired the vernacular, the language in which the work was composed, will more than likely provide it. Whatever the motivations for their gradual but increasing use with vernacular texts, vernacular headings soon become crucially decorative, given that they are frequently offset in red ink and/or display script, and functional, given that they mark out separate texts and other textual units, verbal elements in a developing, specifically vernacular, *mise-en-page*.

So far the discussion of verbal headings has traced a relatively straightforward developmental narrative, progressing from the widespread use of Latin to its steady displacement by English. But, as is the case with any account of premodern practices, the development is more complicated than this allows: it is punctuated by moments of apparent progression as well as regression; furthermore, these verbal forms of titling practice are part of wider (para)textual programme and so should not be separated out from the non-verbal titling practices that accompany them. The interaction of verbal and non-verbal presentational features and their (dis)continuous development, across the post-Conquest period, is borne out by London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian D. xiv: a collection of homiletic, hagiographic

and other educational items produced sometime between 1140 and 1160. There is evidence of all the practices considered in the preceding discussion in this manuscript.²⁷ Eighteen of the collection's headings are of a standard formulaic Latin mode: for example, 'De VIII. uirtutibus' and 'Dominica. .II. in aduentu domini'.²⁸ Many of the items in this manuscript also have vernacular headings: the information these eight headings provide ranges from the more detailed 'Emb Clænnysse þe gehadede mæn healden scylen' to the more perfunctory 'Of drihtelme'.²⁹ Despite the substantial presence of verbal headings in Vespasian D. xiv, they do not constitute the primary means for the identification and/or differentiation of its texts. Furthermore, they appear to derive, in form at least, from the Latin prepositional phrase headings discussed above.

Twenty-seven of Vespasian D. xiv's texts are without any form of heading at all, which suggests that verbal forms of titling practice had only limited utility within it. What is consistent throughout the manuscript, however, is its layout. A thorough but modest programme of red decorated initials, ranging in size from two to nine lines and occasionally embellished with floral (and in one instance zoomorphic) motifs, and the use of spacing serves to differentiate the manuscript's fifty or so main items and the textual divisions within them. Non-verbal features supply the main apparatus for navigating this theological compilation, for distinguishing and/or identifying its numerous texts; however, this apparatus is supplemented by a programme of verbal headings, a substantial proportion of which are rendered in the vernacular. Vespasian D. xiv is representative of both the expansion of verbal (Latin *and* English) and non-verbal (spacing, initials, *litterae notabiliores*, display script, rubrication) titling practices and their combination (verbal headings and non-verbal markers)

²⁷ The two Latin items added to f. 4^r of Vespasian D. xiv by a later twelfth-century hand are excluded from the numbers given in the following discussion. The thesis follows Ker's division of items within the manuscripts: see Ker, *Catalogue*, pp. 272-6.

²⁸ These are the headings to items 8 and 28, respectively: see Ker, *Catalogue*, pp. 272, 275. For a list of the headings (both Latin and English) see Ker, *Catalogue*, pp. 272-6

²⁹ These are the headings to items 2 and 38, respectively: see Ker, *Catalogue*, pp. 272, 275.

in post-Conquest manuscripts containing the vernacular. Given that titling practices are an increasingly important part of the presentation of texts, this mid-twelfth-century manuscript also embodies a burgeoning English type of *mise-en-page*.

In the hundred and fifty years after the Conquest, the physical forms of vernacular texts (the ways in which they are presented), as well as their contents and modes (what they say and how they say it), serve to differentiate and accommodate a specifically English literary corpus. It is then possible to see this emergent *mise-en-page* as a material manifestation of an inchoate but developing idea of English textual identity. Indeed, the manuscripts surveyed in this section, when considered together, give the growing sense of the vernacular composition's textuality, of its burgeoning literate status. While this textuality stretches back to the pre-Conquest era, the manuscripts of the late eleventh, twelfth and early thirteenth centuries reveal various and mounting attempts to express and present English literary texts through a developing set of their own (para)textual codes and conventions, their own (re)created forms and modes. The increasingly distinctive presentation of vernacular literature over this period acts as its distinguishing mark. Having said this, the forms of post-Conquest English compositions cannot be regarded as self-contained, singular, constant, or fixed: rather, they are influenced by the presentational devices of Latin especially, as the previous chapter has argued, as well as those of other vernaculars, and their forms are multiple, including numerous variations and inconsistencies. In view of this fluidity, itself a result of the highly varied circumstances of premodern textual production, it is perhaps more accurate to speak in plurals: to identify emergent vernacular *layouts* and burgeoning vernacular *textualities* in post-Conquest English manuscripts.

4.2 Internal Titling: Early Textual Identities

4.2.1 Literate Influences

So far, this chapter has focussed on the various external forms of early English titling practice exclusively. Yet, in what can be seen as another extension of pre-Conquest practices, the differentiation and/or identification of post-Conquest compositions began to occur more frequently inside the text as well as on its outside or boundaries. The discussion in this section moves away from the external apparatus of the vernacular *mise-en-page* for a short space to look at the development of internal forms of twelfth-century titling practice in more detail.

The verbal descriptions incorporated into the beginnings of some tenth- and eleventh-century Old English poems discussed in the chapter three become a more pronounced stylistic feature of vernacular texts, both English and French, of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In a similar way to the external verbal titling practices considered above, it is not just the numbers of these internal verbal titlings which increase during this period but their functionality as well. Once primarily descriptive, the roles of a text's opening (and closing) words expand in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as they come to acknowledge patronage, explain the circumstances and motivations behind its creation, its projected uses and status, its subject matter and mode, and, increasingly, the name of the author(s) and, more occasionally, a name or names for the text itself. What might take up only a few lines of text in Old English poetry can constitute an entire section (and occasionally multiple sections) of opening text in vernacular compositions from the latter part of the twelfth century onwards.

Recent criticism has drawn attention to the importance of Middle English prologues, proems and prefaces as a key site for the discussion of ideas about and attitudes to compositions in the vernacular but, while this research has helped to open medieval English literature out to new forms of enquiry, it tends to focus on the later medieval period and

consider English literature either in isolation or only within its Latin context.³⁰ This restricted scope has placed a number of limits on the research in this area to date. The exclusion of earlier English examples of these introductory passages effectively denies their presence or at least a presence worthy of consideration in the corpus of English literature. Furthermore, an Anglo-centric focus can have the effect of sidelining the dynamic cross-cultural exchanges that took place during this period, while a consideration of only Latin influences can, as has been seen in the section above, make all compositions in the vernacular seem like secondary productions. Furthermore, the criticism's privileging of the beginning of a text proves especially limiting for a consideration of internal titling practices. The final words of a work – the epilogues, envoys, closing prayers or short poems that can sometimes mark the end – can fulfil similar functions to those which serve to open it.

In its consideration of internal forms of titling practice, then, this part of the chapter extends the conventional purview in a number of ways. By concentrating on these previously neglected areas, by examining the early development of the opening and closing movements of literature in two closely linked vernaculars (French and English), this section attempts to cast some new light not only on the development of titling practices in the early Middle Ages but on the concepts and perceptions of vernacular textual productions, especially with regards to their integrity and identity, in this period as well.

Some of the most notable examples of internal titling practices occur in manuscripts dating from the final decades of the twelfth century. A good example from within the English literary corpus is the intriguing theological compilation known as the *Ormulum*. Contained in a single, apparently autograph manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 1) of the later

³⁰ The studies in this area usually focus on the prologues of late medieval English works as a site for contemporaneous theoretical discourse; however, this study considers these issues only as they intersect with the development of titling practices as evidence in these introductory passages. For an exemplary volume which focuses on the English language specifically, see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne *et al.*, ed., *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999). For a study in the Latin context, see A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn. (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1988).

twelfth century, the *Ormulum* opens with a notoriously extensive sequence of prefatory matter.³¹ The compass of this preamble is suggested by Robert Holt's decision to divide the material into four sections – under the headings of 'Dedication', 'Texts', 'Preface' and 'Introduction' – in his 1878 edition.³² But, as Holt admits in his own preface to the edition, these divisions are not found within the manuscript itself: they are his own modern editorial divisions. In spite of this, Holt's subheadings, and a number of variations of them, are used in a majority of the criticism on and reproductions of the work, no doubt because they separate what is a protracted and repetitive introductory exposition into more manageable and comprehensible units for readerships used to and expectant of comparable modern textual formats.³³

Though the product of contemporary editorial efforts, these subdivisions do appear to capture the overall substance of the prefatory material which includes dedications and descriptions of its subject-matter, purpose and the circumstances of its composition, directions for its envisaged uses and future copying, a list of its texts, and, perhaps of most interest with regards to the development of titling practices (though its positioning, as elaborated below, is contested), namings of both the author and the work.³⁴ Indeed, this lengthy opening, in its extensive differentiation and identification of the compilation of gospels and homiletic explications which follow it, signals an advance in the use of internal

³¹ M. B. Parkes's dating of the *Ormulum* is still held to be authoritative: see Parkes, 'On the Presumed Date and Possible Origin of the Manuscript of the *Ormulum*: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Junius 1', in *Five Hundred Years of Words and Sounds: A Festschrift for Eric Dobson*, ed. E.G. Stanley and Douglas Gray (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 115-27.

³² Robert Holt, ed., 'Preface', *The 'Ormulum', with the Notes and Glossary of Dr. R. M. White* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1878), I. lxxvii-viii. In spite of its shortcomings, itemized throughout this section, the thesis uses Holt's edition as it is, to date, the only available version of the full text.

³³ Modern discussions and reproductions of all or part of the *Ormulum* usually divide the prefatory material into the 'Dedication' and 'Preface'; however, there is some disagreement as to what sections of the text constitute them. For two contrasting treatments, see Treharne, *Old and Middle English*, pp. 273-80; Nils-Lennart Johannesson, *The 'Ormulum' Project* (2000). Available at: <http://www2.english.su.se/nlj/ormproj/ormulum.htm> [accessed 15 May, 2010].

³⁴ Orm, *Ormulum*, in Holt, *The 'Ormulum'*, I. 1. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

titling practices in the vernacular: one which appears to have its roots in Latin literate traditions rather than in the short, orally-derived descriptions of Old English poetry.

Research into the possible sources of the *Ormulum*, and particularly its introductory passages, has been especially industrious. As a result, Holt's division and ordering of the text has been brought into increasing question of late.³⁵ Much of the critical attention in this area has centred on the influence of the various Latin sources, particularly those of the *prologus* or *praefatio* tradition.³⁶ In a recent article, Guzmán Mancho argues that the arrangement of the *Ormulum*'s introduction can be reclassified as that of 'an Aristotelian prologue, modelled on the four Aristotelian *causae*.'³⁷ Mancho presents a persuasive case, as he maps the various sections onto the *causae formalis*, *causae finalis*, *causae efficiens* and *causae materialis*, for re-structuring this prefatory material along specifically medieval lines.³⁸ The *Ormulum*'s introductory matter, then, is widely held to be an early vernacular imitation of classical and early medieval Latin models, and its methods for identifying and distinguishing literary texts by internal means also could be approached from this perspective.

Yet, whatever its sources, the *Ormulum* is a distinctively English (re)composition. Like the homiletic texts considered in the first section of this chapter, the *Ormulum* is a composite remaking of existing material; it is neither a direct translation nor a complete replication of any single Latin archetype. Orm himself explains, early on in his prefatory material, that, while he 'hæfe wend intill Ennglissh/goddspelless hallze lære' adding to them 'þatt tatt te Goddspell meneþþ', he has also

³⁵ Two recent articles, in particular, have questioned Holt's ordering of the prefatory material, see Guzmán Mancho, 'Is *Ormulum*'s Introduction an Instance of an Aristotelian Prologue?', *Neophilologus*, 88 (2004), 477-92; Johannesson, 'The Four-wheeled Quadriga and the Seven Sacraments: On the Sources for the "Dedication" of the *Ormulum*', in *Bells Chiming from the Past: Cultural and Linguistic Studies on Early English*, ed. Isabel Moskowich-Spiegel and Begoña Crespo-García (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 227-45 (pp. 227-30).

³⁶ Articles considering the *Ormulum*'s possible sources, often focussing on the Latin, include: Stephen Morrison, 'Sources for the *Ormulum*: A Re-Examination', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 84 (1983), 419-36; Morrison, 'New Sources for the *Ormulum*', *Neophilologus*, 68 (1984), 444-50; Mancho, '*Ormulum*'s Introduction'; Johannesson, 'Four-wheeled Quadriga'; Johannesson, 'Orm's Relationship to His Latin Sources', in *Studies in Middle English Forms and Meanings*, ed. Gabriella Mazzon (Oxford: Lang, 2007), pp. 133-43.

³⁷ Mancho, '*Ormulum*'s Introduction', p. 482.

³⁸ For these new divisions, see Mancho, '*Ormulum*'s Introduction', pp. 482-7.

sett her o þiss boc
 Amang Goddspelless wordess,
 All þurh me sellfenn, maniz word
 þa ríme swa to fillenn;
 Acc þu shallt findenn þatt min word,
 Ez3whær þær itt iss eked,
 Ma33 hellpenn þa þatt redenn itt
 To sen and & unnderrstandenn
 All þess te better hu þe33m birrþ
 þe Goddspell unnderrstandenn.³⁹

Orm does not only translate the Latin gospel and homiletic texts, he supplements them with his own words. These additions are made, he goes on, so that ‘læwedd folle’ (l. 55) are better able to understand them, which is, as Orm reiterates throughout this opening section, the main purpose envisaged for his vernacular preaching guide. In a departure from the critical trend, then, the *Ormulum* can be seen as an attempt to reconcile long-established written traditions with the forms and styles available and appropriate to a burgeoning literate language and its predominantly aural audience. It represents much more than a replication of prior sources; it is a vernacularization, the vernacular (re)making, of them.

Considering that it is a text that draws attention to its Englishness, and, furthermore, that a robust body of Old English homiletic writing precedes it, it is somewhat surprising that scholars generally sideline or overlook the *Ormulum*’s vernacular sources in their critical considerations. Among the rare exceptions here are Stephen Morrison and Meg Worley. In the phraseology of the *Ormulum*, Morrison detects a general ‘indebtedness to the Old English homiletic tradition’: while many of the ‘wholly conventional expressions’ of this earlier tradition are ‘appropriated in an essentially unmodified form’, others bear a ‘more complex association’ as Orm ‘assimilate[s], re-shape[s] and re-use[s]’ them.⁴⁰ For Worley, the influence of earlier vernacular homiletic material is discernible in the *Ormulum*’s unique

³⁹ Orm, *Ormulum*, in Holt, *The ‘Ormulum’*, ll. 13-4, 34, 41-50. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated. Holt’s begins the numbering of lines in the *Ormulum* anew in each section; in the interests of clarity, this thesis specifies the section as well as line number(s) in all subsequent in-text citation.

⁴⁰ Morrison, ‘Orm’s English Sources’, *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 221 (1984), 54-64 (p. 64).

prosodic style; comparing Orm with his predecessor Ælfric in particular, Worley observes: '[b]oth homilists take pains to maintain the rhythm in the text, making semantic units coincide with metrical phrasing.'⁴¹ Modern criticism of the *Ormulum*, it seems, places too great an emphasis on its Latin origins, on its continuation of classical traditions. The *Ormulum* is part of a long, as yet relatively unexplored, tradition of exegetical (re)composition in English and, as the studies of Morrison and Worley demonstrate, it is both resumptive and adaptive. For this study, mapping a diachronic development of English titling practice, the changes to these earlier practices – whether they are additions, omissions, revisions, or adaptations – can be equally, and sometimes especially, significant. A bibliography for *Ormulum*-studies would give the idea that most of the research focuses on the *Ormulum*'s status as an English text; the majority of these studies, however, are philological.⁴² It is possible, though, as the essays of both Worley and Morrison indicate, to see the *Ormulum*'s vernacularization of its composite texts as extending beyond its use of the English language alone. As the intimated in the previous section, aspects of its layout and arrangement betray what can be identified as a specifically English form of textual identity.

The Junius 1 manuscript reflects the presentation of earlier homiletic compilations in a variety of respects: it is written in a continuous, plain style of script with low grade

⁴¹ Meg Worley, 'Using the *Ormulum* to Redefine Vernacularity', in *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), pp. 19-30 (p. 25).

⁴² One such bibliography forms part of Johannesson, *The 'Ormulum' Project*. A list of the numerous articles which discuss the *Ormulum*'s English status from a philological angle includes: Betty S. Phillips, 'Word Frequency and the Actuation of Sound Change', *Language*, 43 (1984), 375-82; Robert W. Murray, 'Phonological Drift in English', *Indogermanische Forschungen*, 97 (1992), 122-44; Christopher Cannon, 'Spelling Practice: The *Ormulum* and the Word', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 33 (1997), 229-44; B. Richard Page, 'Double Consonant Graphs in the *Ormulum*', *Interdisciplinary Journal for Germanic Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis*, 5 (2000), 245-71. Two exceptions here are Morrison, 'Orm's English Sources'; Worley, 'Using the *Ormulum*'.

decorative features, it is, as so many medievalists attest, no presentational copy.⁴³ In other ways, though, the *Ormulum* manuscript represents a furthering of the vernacular *mise-en-page* as the format varies between single and double columns, punctuation is thorough, the text is written in a consistent semi-phonetic style and the script takes an unusually bold form. Thus, although the untidy appearance of the manuscript has been read as an indication of its indecipherability, careful scrutiny reveals remarkable consistency in layout, particularly in respect of textual divisions.⁴⁴ Indeed, the manuscript appears to present a working-draft copy of the text, crowded as it is with countless overwritings, deletions, insertions, and corrections.⁴⁵ In Nils-Lennart Johannesson's words, the *Ormulum* manuscript is 'one huge illustration of writing as process rather than product.'⁴⁶ The multiple stages evident in the transcription of the text – the initial copying of it (which could itself be a copy of an earlier draft) and the layering of subsequent revisions to it – indicate another advance in the textuality of early English literature as what remains of the manuscript constitutes an extended exercise in the use of writing to compose (rather than record or translate) in the vernacular. Looking past its limited aesthetic value, then, the *Ormulum*'s *mise-en-page* can be seen to embody a growing literate mentality in the composition and production of English texts.

The addition of an external form of titling practice to the beginning of the *Ormulum* does not appear to have been part of this process of textual revisioning. No offset *incipit* or

⁴³ The *Ormulum* manuscript is commonly classified as 'unreadable', 'untidy' and 'ugly'. Examples of this sort of description can be found in J. A. W. Bennett, G. V. Smithers, and Norman Davis, *Early Middle English Verse and Prose* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), p. 174; Katharine Breen, *Imagining an English Reading Community, 1150-1400* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 109. Speaking of the manuscripts physical presentation, Robert W. Burchfield notes that there is 'little regard for its appearance': see Burchfield, 'The Language and Orthography of the *Ormulum* MS.', *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1956), 56-87 (p. 57).

⁴⁴ For further discussion of the regularity of the *Ormulum*'s layout, see the various studies of Johannesson, especially: Johannesson, 'Four-wheeled Quadriga', pp. 228-30.

⁴⁵ Burchfield, in one of the earliest characterizations of the manuscript as such, sees Junius 1 as 'a "workshop" draft': see Burchfield, 'Language and Orthography', p. 57.

⁴⁶ Johannesson, 'Overwriting, Deletion and Erasure: Exploring the Changes in the *Ormulum* Manuscript', *Jestin*, 2 (1997), 21-29 (p. 26). For further more detailed descriptions of the *mise-en-page* of the Junius 1 manuscript, see Joan E. Turville-Petre, 'Studies on the *Ormulum* MS.', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 46 (1947), 1-27; Parkes, 'On the Presumed Date'.

explicit, neither English nor Latin, appears at the beginning or end of the Junius 1 transcription. Instead, it seems the existing prefatory material is augmented at some later stage in the work's revisions to include a form of internal titling practice new to vernacular (re)compositions: that is, distinction and identification of the work through naming. The section which Holt refers to as the 'Preface' (fols 9^r-9^v) was marked for insertion after line 156, immediately before Orm's explication of the meaning of 'gospel'.⁴⁷ Interestingly for this discussion, the added text begins by naming both the text and the author/compiler: '[p]iss boc iss nemnedd Orrmulum/Forrþi þatt Orrm itt wrohhte' ('Preface', l. 1); indeed, the text is named for the author.⁴⁸

This naming has been interpreted in variety of different ways by modern literary scholars. Albert C. Baugh sees this naming as the result of Orm's combination of 'the ending of the Latin word *speculum* [...] with his own name.'⁴⁹ Mancho, on the other hand, building on the Old Norse derivation of the name Orm, posits 'the use of encrypted language' in the naming of the text as '*Ormulum* read backwards' gives rise to two possible Old Norse meanings: '*mulum ro* «be there in the mountain» or [...] *múlar ro* «be there peace in Múlar (Iceland)»'.⁵⁰ For Baugh this naming serves as an ironic comment on the work's length:

[i]t is possible that [Orm] was conscious of the diminutive force of the [Latin] ending [*um*] and was suggesting modestly that his effort should be thought of as "the little book of Orrm." If so, it is the only evidence in the entire work that he had a sense of humor, for it would have filled ten volumes of modern print.⁵¹

⁴⁷ For statements supporting this interpretation of the *Ormulum*'s arrangement, see Heinrich C. Matthes, *Die Einheitlich des Ormulum: Studien zur Textkritik, zu den Quellen und zur sprachlichen Form von Orrmins Evangelienbuch* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1933), pp. 35-7; Burchfield, 'Language and Orthography', p. 72, n. 1; Johannesson, 'Four-wheeled Quadriga', p. 228; Breen, *Imagining*, p. 116.

⁴⁸ To the best of my knowledge, the *Ormulum* represents one of the earliest namings of a text. Earlier namings of authors/compiler do exist, however; see, for example, the earlier, tenth-century naming of Ælfric in the Latin and Old English prefaces which accompany his first and second sequences of *Catholic Homilies*: see Jonathan Wilcox, ed., *Ælfric's Prefaces* (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994), pp. 107-12.

⁴⁹ Albert C. Baugh, 'The Middle English Period (1100-1500)', in *A Literary History of England: The Middle Ages*, ed. Albert C. Baugh, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 1977), pp. 109-312 (p. 158). This reading of the *Ormulum*'s internal naming is now a critical commonplace. For an early interpretation in this vein, see Henry Bradley, *The Collected Papers of Henry Bradley*, ed. Robert Seymour Bridges (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928), p. 219.

⁵⁰ Mancho, '*Ormulum*'s Introduction', pp. 486.

⁵¹ Baugh, 'Middle English', p. 158.

In Mancho's view, however, the doubling of Norse meanings results in a doubling of interpretations: '[w]hile the first alternative [*mulum ro*] may shed light on Orrmin's new faith (if the mountain is [*sic.*] taken to be Calvary), the second [*múlar ro*] may carry a hint of the land of Orrmin's origin.'⁵² Baugh and Mancho arrive at quite different (but not necessarily mutually exclusive) conclusions: while one suggests a possibly humorous pun on a Latin convention for naming written compositions, the other proposes a similar sort of word play but in the vernacular language of Old Norse.

What the thesis finds most suggestive here is the potential for dual Latin and vernacular interpretations of this naming. *Ormulum*, it seems, results from the combination of the Old Norse-English name *Orm* with the Latin ending *ulum*. In a reflection of the work itself, then, this naming signals a fusing of vernacular and Latin modes. The name *Ormulum* indicates the work's vernacularity, its status as a new English form of liturgical guide, while simultaneously evoking the existing Latin textual authorities on which it draws. A rereading of Baugh's *speculum* connection lends additional support to this line of argument. According to critics Henry Bradley and Ernst Robert Curtius, if a work was referred to as a *speculum* in the Middle Ages it was usually a work of the improvement and/or instructional genre.⁵³ This certainly seems to be the case for the few *specula* that predate the *Ormulum*, including St. Augustine's *Speculum de scriptura sacra*, a fifth-century biblical florilegium, and the *Speculum virginum*, an eleventh-century pedagogical work for religious women.⁵⁴ In a thorough study of the historical uses of the word *speculum* (meaning 'mirror') in literary works, Rita Mary Bradley shows that it was not only a popular name for medieval edificatory

⁵² Mancho, 'Ormulum's Introduction', pp. 486-7.

⁵³ Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1953), p. 336 (n. 56).

⁵⁴ *Speculum*-names became especially popular for works of instruction/improvement in the period following the *Ormulum*, as in Roger Bacon's *Speculum alchimiae*, Edmund Rich's *Speculum ecclesiae*, Albertus Magnus's *Speculum astronomiae* and the many *speculums* (*Speculum naturale*, *Speculum doctrinale*, *Speculum historiale*) of Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum maius*. Kenneth Sisam also notes the rarity of *speculum*-names before the thirteenth century: see Sisam, 'MSS. Bodley 340 and 342: Ælfric's Catholic Homilies', *The Review of English Studies*, 9, (1933), 1-12 (p. 6, n. 1).

and didactic works but also a popular analogy within them (as in Augustine's mirrors of the mind and soul).⁵⁵ The *Ormulum* is a part of these literate Latin traditions: it is, as its prefatory matter repeatedly asserts, a preaching manual composed '[f]or whase mót to læwedd folc/Larspell off Goddspell tellen ('Dedication', ll. 55-6).' And yet the text is not identified as a Latin *speculum* as such; rather, it is named twice named 'Ormulum' ('Preface', ll. 1, 94). Indeed, the prefixing of Old Norse-English *Orm* to the Latin *ulum* signals the adaptation and advancement of Latin sources. The *Ormulum*, both as name and as text, represents the vernacularization of these traditions: it is a work of conventional biblical exegesis but it is one which is written in and reworked for the English.

It is, however, possible to overestimate the importance of the name 'Ormulum' for subsequent interpretations of the text. Although many critics view 'Ormulum' as the title of the text, it is, rather, the name of the text or what it is called, as the prefatory matters makes clear in its statements that '[þ]iss boc iss nemmedd Ormulum' ('Preface', l. 1) and 'þiss Ennglisshe boc/Iss Ormulum zehatenn' ('Preface', ll. 93-4). The distinction here is a subtle one. As the earlier chapters of this thesis have shown, the word *title* is now accompanied by a complex of associations born of modern (para)textual conceptions, experiences, standards and practices. Resulting from the title's increasing replication, standardization and authorization in and in relation to texts, the act of titling now carries with it a sense of its own fixity, permanence and security. The conditions for such stability (or, rather, the impression of it), the means for fixing (or appearing to) the identity of a text, did not pertain in premodernity.⁵⁶ Titles did not exist, and, although practices for distinguishing and/or identifying texts, the title's antecedents, did, these could be multiple, conflicting and variable;

⁵⁵ For an illuminating and thorough study of the use of the word *speculum* in the naming/descriptions of literature throughout the Middle Ages, see Rita Mary Bradley, 'Backgrounds of the Title *Speculum* in Mediaeval Literature', *Speculum*, 29 (1954), 100-15.

⁵⁶ For a similar point, see chapter one (Titles: Now and Then') of this thesis (p. 2, n. 7). Gérard Genette also outlines various complications in respect of modern titles: see Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 68-72.

they were unregulated and their presence unguaranteed. For this thesis, then, the naming of a premodern text represents a less definite/definitive act than does the titling of a modern text.

In the light of the above distinction, a further question might be asked of the *Ormulum*'s internal titling practice. Rather than asking only what the name 'Ormulum' reveals about the text and its contexts, this study also questions what the inclusion of the act of naming itself suggests. Where before internal titling practices in the vernacular had consisted of descriptions, as found in the Old English poems considered in chapter three, and, albeit less often, namings of the author, as in Alfred's *Preface to Gergory's Cura Pastoralis* or Æfric's homilies, the *Ormulum* stands apart in that it includes what appears to be one of the earliest explicit textual (as opposed to paratextual) designations of an English composition. The incorporation of such a determinative act of naming indicates that, while the circumstances to support and ensure the fixing of a text's identification/identity did not exist in premodernity, ideas of and aspirations towards the possibility of doing so did. Indeed, the internal naming of the *Ormulum* can be viewed as a deliberate attempt to circumvent the instability and variability of premodern textual production and reception.

The internal positioning is especially crucial here. As part of the text itself, this interior naming (as opposed to that which takes place in an exterior heading, for example) will have stood a greater chance of survival in future transmission, but, given that every aspect of a premodern (para)text, whether external or internal, was ultimately subject to the discretion of the scribe(s), there were no absolute guarantees to its longevity.⁵⁷ It is for this reason perhaps that the name of the text and that of the author (from which the text's name

⁵⁷ Here, the thesis acknowledges again that the *Ormulum* survives in a single copy in the Junius 1 manuscript. The fact that there are no extant contemporaneous or later versions of the *Ormulum* does not automatically mean that none existed but rather than none have survived. That future transmission was envisaged for this work is clear in Orm's instructions to 'write riht' ('Dedication', l. 97); therefore, the statements which follow are based on a reading of the *Ormulum* that takes into account this projected circulation.

derives) are cited at multiple points throughout the *Ormulum*'s introductory matter.⁵⁸ The links between and recurrences of these namings do not only underline the significance of authorial and textual identity within the *Ormulum* but they also serve as a guard against later omissions or alterations and, in so doing, these internal designations ensure that Orm's *Ormulum* will not be easily forgotten, at least by those who have read or heard the relevant parts of the *Ormulum*'s extensive preamble.

There is, however, some question as to how far the *Ormulum*'s prefatory matter, and thus its namings, would have circulated. Much of the criticism, focused as it is on the 'Ormography' of the text, draws attention to the *Ormulum*'s spoken qualities, imagining a listening audience rather than a readership. Few scholars have given much thought to the more complicated picture that its genre, that of a liturgical companion, presents. The *Ormulum* was conceived as a book for consultation: it is a manual for those who wish to preach in the vernacular.⁵⁹ Much of the opening preamble, therefore, appears to address those who will disseminate the gospels and homilies rather than those who will receive it, those who will teach them as opposed to those who will learn from them. These introductory sections can be seen as the guide to the liturgical manual they head, but, in its detailing of its projected audience, directions for its use and its future copying, it is a guide directed specifically to the prospective user. It is, therefore, likely that the namings of author and text also contained in these opening sections would have circulated in primarily literate, clerical circles. Any circulation beyond these circles is uncertain. It is extremely unlikely, considering its length, that the *Ormulum* would have been read aloud in full; its use was probably of a

⁵⁸ For namings of the text, see 'Preface', ll. 1, 94. For namings of the author, see 'Dedication', ll. 324, 325; 'Preface', l. 2.

⁵⁹ For an extremely persuasive account of the *Ormulum*'s guiding capacity, see Worley, 'Using the *Ormulum*', pp. 22-26 (p. 23): '[f]ew scholars who have studied the *Ormulum* in depth give any serious consideration to the fact that England was not homogenously Anglophone in 1180, around the time Orm was writing [...] While Sisam pictured Orm's idiosyncratic writing system as slowing down English priests who were inclined to rush through the reading of the homilies, it seems more likely that Orm was trying to guide the pronunciation of non-native speakers reading to a congregation of English-speaking laypeople.'

more referential kind, where a priest would select and recite (either from the text itself or from memory) certain section(s) relevant to the particular sermon they were giving; indeed, the inclusion of a list of texts or what could be deemed, given its facilitative inclusion of numbers and Latin *incipits*, an early version of the modern-day table of contents is indicative of this kind of usage. The role of the *Ormulum*'s introductory material within these oral-aural settings would have been, at best, minor; it follows, therefore, that the names of Orm and Ormulum and the budding authorial and textual identities they denote would have been little known among and insignificant to those outside of the religious orders.

The reach of these names even among the literate religious was not assured. The prefaces, prologues and introductions sometimes appended to early medieval theological collections like the *Ormulum* seem to have had a precarious existence. Out of over thirty manuscripts, for example, only one manuscript, the late tenth-/early eleventh-century Cambridge, University Library, Gg. III. 28 manuscript, preserves the Latin and Old English prefaces to Ælfric's first and second series of *Catholic Homilies* in full. Parts of these prefaces are excerpted elsewhere, but, for the most part, Ælfric's homiletic material appears to have circulated without them.⁶⁰ Examination of the manuscript tradition – surveys of which can be found in the Early English Text Society editions of John C. Pope, Malcolm Godden, and Peter Clemoes – reveals that it was the homilies themselves which proved most popular for later recopying, extraction, recompilation and adaptation.⁶¹ As Jonathan Wilcox notes, while '[t]he integrity of the text of individual homilies by Ælfric was generally

⁶⁰ For what is, so far, an unparalleled overview of each of Ælfric's prefaces, see Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, pp. 1-85. For information on the prefaces to the *Catholic Homilies* specifically, see Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, pp. 22-36, 74-7.

⁶¹ John C. Pope, ed., *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection: Volume 1*, Early English Text Society, o.s. 259 (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 6-93; Malcolm Godden, ed., *Ælfric's 'Catholic Homilies': The Second Series Text*, Early English Text Society, s.s. 5 (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. xx-lxxxvi; Peter Clemoes, ed., *Ælfric's 'Catholic Homilies': The First Series Text*, Early English Text Society, s.s. 17 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. xvix-xxii.

respected’, ‘[t]he integrity of the context of [the] homilies’, their status as individual sequences, as textual wholes, was not.⁶²

An awareness of the selective, excerptive tendencies of the scribes/compilers of homiletic compilations likely motivates Orm’s more lengthy instructions to future copyists:

& whase wilenn shall þiss boc
 Effþ oþer siþe written,
 Him bidde Icc þatt hef write riht,
 Swasumm þiss boc him tæcheþþ:
 All þwertt út after þatt itt iss
 Uppo þiss firrste bisne,
 Wiþþ all swillc ríme alls her iss sett,
 Wiþþ all se fele wordess;
 & tatt he loke wel þatt he
 An bocstaff write twiþþess,
 Ezþwhær þær itt uppo þiss boc
 Iss wítenn o þatt wise.

(‘Dedication’, ll. 95-106)

These remarks amplify those of Ælfric’s two centuries previously. Where Ælfric ‘entreat[s] in God’s name, that if anyone wishes to copy this book, he earnestly correct it by the exemplar, lest we be blamed because of careless scribes’ (‘halsige on Godes naman, gif hwa þas boc awritan wylle, þæt he hi geornlice gerihte be ðære bysene, þy læs ðe we ðurh gymelease wíteras geleahtrode beon’), Orm is more didactic as he instructs later scribes to work from his first example, taking care to replicate exactly the metre, rhymes, words, and phonetic spelling or ‘Ormography’.⁶³ The prescriptiveness of these directions leads Worley to conclude that ‘Orm may be the bossiest writer in Middle English literature’.⁶⁴ In Orm’s naming of himself and of the text, and of the text after himself, he confirms the integrality of his text. These namings, therefore, can be seen as part of Orm’s prescriptive aims in that they inform the scribe/reader that the *Ormulum* is a whole work composed as such by Orm; in this way, the authorial/textual identity of the text functions as a way to certify its textual integrity.

⁶² Wilcox, *Ælfric’s Prefaces*, p. 34.

⁶³ Ælfric of Eynsham, ‘Old English Preface to his First Series of Catholic Homilies’, in Treharne, *Old and Middle English*, pp. 116-21 (ll. 65-6): both the original Old English and the Modern English translation are from this edition; Worley, ‘Using the *Ormulum*’, p. 20.

⁶⁴ Worley, ‘Using the *Ormulum*’, p. 21.

To what extent Orm was successful in this venture is, due to the absence of later manuscript witnesses, a matter of conjecture. Yet, whether he was successful or not, the attempt remains. There is a difference, however, between the textual identity that Orm claims for his homiletic compilation and that which a modern author bestows on her/his composition. This difference is concisely summarized by Zumthor who argues that ‘the factor of personal invention came into play in organizing macrocontextual units of the corpus, but had only a very weak and diffuse role at the level of the microcontext.’⁶⁵ Though Zumthor is speaking specifically of medieval French poetry here, his comments resonate with Orm’s vernacular enterprise: his is not an innovative, creative, original composition but a renewal, a re-rendering, a vernacularization of an already extant body of written sources. The *Ormulum*’s introductory material, and particularly the namings of author and text it includes, offers a way of simultaneously signalling the departure from and continuation of tradition, and, in so doing, it puts forward an alternative vernacular form of medieval textual identity.

4.2.2 Oral-literate Influences

Thus far the discussion has concentrated on the *Ormulum*. Yet developments within internal forms of titling practice are not solely restricted to literate, Latin-derived compositions in the English vernacular. A drive to differentiate and/or identify texts during the course of their opening and closing movements is also discernible among a number of late twelfth-century French works of a more secular, courtly character. Even though these works often evoke oral compositional settings and roots (whether real or fictional, intentional or otherwise), many betray a similar concern for issues of textual and authorial identity as well as the authority and integrity of texts to that found in the introductory matter of works, like the *Ormulum*, which stem from long-established written traditions.

⁶⁵ Zumthor, *Medieval Poetics*, p. 45.

Before considering these Old French internal titling practices, a word must be said about the place of such material within an account of English titling practices. Given that English society became broadly trilingual in the centuries after the Conquest, any consideration of this period, titological or otherwise, cannot profitably avoid discussion of the three predominant languages: English, French and Latin. The trilingual miscellanies discussed in the next chapter which were circulating in England during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries exemplify the interrelation of these languages and their (para)textual modes. Further evidence for a lively scene of literary exchange, both between England and France and between oral/vernacular and literate/Latin traditions, in the late medieval period is found in the increasing number of works being translated from and into these languages. One series of Latin-French-English translations demonstrates the dynamics of this exchange and its effects on titling practices particularly well. During the 1130s, Geoffrey of Monmouth composed his Latin prose chronicle which he describes in the opening dedication as the *Historia Regum Britanniae*. A few decades later, towards the middle of the twelfth century, a French verse translation/adaptation of Geoffrey's *Historia* was made by Wace, described as *Le Roman de Brut* by the manuscript headings or the *Gestes des Bretons* by the author himself. Sometime around the turn of the thirteenth-century, Lazamon composed his alliterative English verse translation/adaptation of Wace's *Brut*, which the manuscripts headings describe as the *Hystoria Brutonum*. The verbal echoes of these titling practices (both internal and external), which extend further to the Welsh and Norse languages, bear witness, as do the texts themselves, to the extent of this linguistic and literary cross-cultural exchange. It is for these reasons, and others which will become apparent in due course, that Old French practices of titling find their way into this discussion.

Unlike the *Ormulum*'s separate sections of prefatory material, the prologues and epilogues of Old French literature, particularly those which mark the Arthurian romances of

Chrétien de Troyes and the individual *lais* of Marie de France, tend to be thoroughly integrated into the texts they head or close.⁶⁶ As an integral part of the primary text, it may be supposed that these opening and closing passages and so the various forms of internal titling practice found within them will have circulated relatively widely, appearing, in contrast with the largely clerical, literate circulation of the *Ormulum*'s introductory matter, in both aural/oral and literate settings (and in combinations of the two). This supposition is borne out by the manuscript witnesses of the romances and *lais*. The integrality of these sections is visible in the continuous layout of the text of the manuscripts, particularly those which present complete sequences of the works as do the large collections containing Chrétien's romances Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 794 and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 1450, and the miscellany including Marie's *lais* London, British Library, Harley 978.

Existing criticism on the prologues and epilogues to Chrétien's and Marie's works, as with that of the *Ormulum*, has focused primarily on their links with earlier Latin models.⁶⁷ This privileging of specifically literate influences has tended to marginalize the oral-literate status of these vernacular compositions and, as a result, few studies have considered these textual beginnings and endings within the context of their largely oral performance and aural reception. Considered in the light of the majority who would hear these works as well as

⁶⁶ As it contains no specific descriptions or designations of the *lais*, the *General Prologue* is not considered here. However, the implications and effects of Marie's *General Prologue* are explored in the following chapter ('Later Medieval Titling: Into the Fourteenth Century') in its consideration of the manuscripts of Chrétien and Marie's works.

⁶⁷ Articles which concentrate on the influence of Latin traditions on Chrétien's prologues and epilogues include: Tony Hunt, 'The Rhetorical Background to the Arthurian Prologue: Tradition and the Old French Vernacular Prologue', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 6 (1970), 1-23; Hunt, 'Tradition and Originality in the Prologues of Chrestien de Troyes', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 8 (1972), 320-44. For a similarly-focused group of articles on Marie, see Leo Spitzer, 'The Prologue to the *Lais* of Marie de France and Medieval Poetics', *Modern Philology*, 41 (1943), 96-102; Kristine Brightenback, 'Remarks on the "Prologue" to Marie de France's *Lais*', *Romance Philology*, 30 (1976), 168-77; Logan E. Whalen, *Marie de France and the Poetics of Memory* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), pp. 35-60. There are some exceptions, however. In the mid-1970s Marie-Louise Ollier proposes a distancing of previous literate traditions in considerations of Chrétien's prologues: see Ollier, 'The Author in the Text: The Prologues of Chrétien de Troyes', *Yale French Studies*, 51 (1974), 26-41. In 1993 Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner devotes some space in her chapter on Marie's *lais* to their oral-literate context and its implications: see Bruckner, *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 189-206.

those who would read them, these introductory and closing sections of text can be seen as more than just allusive or adaptive exercises in conventional rhetoric; for an audience who would not necessarily be able to see the guiding features of the manuscript page – an enlarged or illuminated initial, the top of the page or column, or more commonly in later manuscripts the rubricated headings and miniatures – these parts of the text would have possessed a functional value as well, informing them, among other things, of the beginning and ending, the subject matter, origins, and purpose of the work they are about to hear/have heard. With this functionality in mind, the thesis extends its consideration of vernacular titling practices horizontally as it turns to the different methods used to internally differentiate and/or identify several Old French literary compositions roughly contemporaneous with the *Ormulum*.

Each of the five late twelfth-century romances attributed to Chrétien de Troyes includes a short passage at its beginning and/or its end that, among other things, distinguishes and/or identifies it. The means by which this textual (as opposed to paratextual) differentiation and/or identification is actioned varies across the romances, particularly in terms of their lengths and contents; that said, two forms seem to predominate: that is, the description of the text (its circumstances, genre, subject) and the naming of the author. The prologue to *Erec and Enide*, widely considered as the earliest of Chrétien's romances and so of Arthurian romances more widely, demonstrates both of these forms. After a brief proverbial opening, the author's name is given in full as the reader/listener is told of his literary motivations, the work's source and its meaning:

Por ce dist Crestiens de Troies
 que reisons est que totevoies
 doit chascuns panser et antandre
 a bien dire et a bien aprandre;
 et tret d'un conte d'avanture
 une molt bele conjointure.
 par qu'an puet prover et savoir
 que cil ne fet mie savoir

qui s'escience n'abandone.

And so Chrétien de Troyes says that it is reasonable for everyone to think and strive in every way to speak well and teach well, and from a tale of adventure he draws a beautifully ordered composition that clearly proves that a man does not act intelligently if he does not give free rein to his knowledge.⁶⁸

This is followed not by a naming of the text itself but by a brief description of the tale, a comment on its oral-literate positioning, and another punning mention of the author's name:

d'Erec, le fil Lac, est li contes,
 que devant rois et devant contes
 depecier et corronpre suelent
 cil qui de conter vivre vuelent.
 Des or comancerai l'estoire
 qui toz jorz mes iert an mimoire
 tant con durra crestïantez;
 de ce s'est Crestïens vantez.
 (ll. 19-26)

This is the tale of Erec, son of Lac, which those who try to live by storytelling customarily mangle and corrupt before kings and counts. I shall begin the story that will be in memory for evermore, as long as Christendom last – of this does Chrétien boast. (p. 37)

While there is some concern for the identity and authority of the author in this prologue, and some concern for the text's integrity, for the creation of an authoritative lasting account, there is no attempt to fix the text's identity by conferring a name upon it. This stands in contrast with the *Ormulum's* introductory material in which the namings of author and text are part of the same process of confirming the work's identity and thus its authority and integrity

The conflicting attitudes to textual identity displayed by these late twelfth-century vernacular works may be explained by their very different statuses, sources, genres and uses. While the one derives from an established tradition of scholastic, literate compositions, the other arises from a complex amalgamation of oral and literate sources and modes. Where one is based on Scripture, the other is founded on material of a more popular kind. While one is

⁶⁸ Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, in *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes, édités d'après copie de Guiot (Bibl. nat. fr. 794)*, ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Champion, 1955), I. 9-17. The Modern English translation is taken from Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, in *Arthurian Romances*, ed. and trans. William W. Kibler (London and New York: Penguin, 1991), pp. 37-122 (p. 37). All further references are to these editions and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

composed to facilitate better instruction of ‘læwedd folc’ (*Ormulum*, l. 55), the other is produced to provide entertainment in aristocratic circles, ‘devant rois et devant contes’ (*Erec et Enide*, l. 20). And, where one is a redeployment (or vernacularization) of inherited writings, the other constitutes the initial setting down of a previously inchoate tradition of composition in the vernacular. In the light of such comparisons, Chrétien’s romances emerge as a more fluid, dynamic literary form. The fixing of textual identity in such mutable conditions may not have been a priority or even a possibility.

As if to prove the point, Chrétien never provides names for his romances. As Zumthor points out, Chrétien ‘does not so much name them as describe them by a brief statement of their theme’; this propensity, however, is frequently obscured in modern translations in which these descriptions are usually replaced with the received titles for the works and/or the elements that correspond with these modern titles are picked out in italics.⁶⁹ William W. Kibler’s English translation of the prologue to *Cligés* is exemplary in this respect:

[h]e who wrote *Erec and Enide*, who translated Ovid’s *Commandments* and the *Art of Love* into French, who wrote *The Shoulder Bite*, and about King Mark and Isolde the Blonde, and of the metamorphosis of the hoopoe, swallow, and nightingale, begins now a new tale of a youth who, in Greece, was of King Arthur’s line.⁷⁰

Consultation of the original Old French text presents a slightly different account of Chrétien’s oeuvre:

Cil qui fist d’Erec et d’Enide,
 Et les comandemanz d’Ovide
 Et l’art d’amors an romans mist,
 Et le mors de l’espaule fist,
 Del roi Marc et d’Ysalt la blonde,
 Et de la hupe et de l’aronde
 Et del rossignol la muance,
 Un novel conte rancomanse
 D’un vaslet qui an Grece fu

⁶⁹ Zumthor, *Medieval Poetics*, p. 48.

⁷⁰ Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés*, in *Arthurian Romances*, ed. and trans. William W. Kibler (London and New York: Penguin, 1991), pp. 123-205 (p. 123). All further references in Modern English are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

Del linage le roi Artu.⁷¹

No namings take place within this opening. It is not, therefore, an inventory of the titles of Chrétien's works; rather, it is a descriptive list of them. Given the relatively small number of texts in circulation at this time, these thematic descriptions – like those found in the first and final lines of the Old English poems considered in chapter three or, more relevantly here, in other twelfth-century French works such as Wace's *Le roman de Brut* and *Le roman de Rou*, Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Le roman de Troie*, and the anonymous *Le roman de Thèbes* and *Le roman d'Enéas* – provide the reader/listener with sufficient verbal distinction and/or identification. For an audience of listeners, the knowledge that '[d]el chevalier de la charrete/comance Crestiens son livre' or '[d]el Chevalier au lyeon fine/Crestiens son romans ensi' would have offered distinction and identification enough.⁷² In this way, it is possible to see Chrétien's prologues and epilogues, like the prefatory matter of the *Ormulum*, as an extended (though not so protracted) form of internal titling practice.

The absence of textual names within Chrétien's romances offers further support to the idea, put forward in relation to the *Ormulum* above, that a more flexible idea of textual identity pertained in late twelfth-century vernacular writing. Yet the attention accorded to the integrity of texts, to the attainment and maintenance of set forms, in several of the romances seems to stand in direct opposition to this apparent elasticity. *Le Chevalier au Lion*, for example, concludes with the statement:

n'onques plus conter n'en oï
 ne ja plus n'en orroiz conter
 s'an n'i vialt mançonge ajoster
 (ll. 6806-8)

⁷¹ Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés*, in *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes, édités d'après copie de Guiot (Bibl. nat. fr. 794)*, ed. Alexandre Micha (Paris: Champion, 1957), II. 1-10. All further references in Old French are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

⁷² Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, in *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes, édités d'après copie de Guiot (Bibl. nat. fr. 794)*, ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Champion, 1958), III. 24-5; Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au Lion (Yvain)*, in *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes, édités d'après copie de Guiot (Bibl. nat. fr. 794)*, ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Champion, 1978), IV. 6804-5. All further references in Old French are to these editions and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

I've not heard any more about it, and you'll never hear anything more unless one adds lies to it.⁷³

The implication of these lines is that the preceding account constitutes the true story. Viewed alongside the declaration in the prologue to *Erec et Enide* that *jongleurs* have previously 'deprecier et corronpre (l. 21)' the story and the assertion in *Le Chevalier de la Charrete* that Chrétien takes pains to add nothing apart from 'sa painne et s'antancion' (l. 29), it appears that a desire to establish correct, complete, authoritative versions motivates a number of Chrétien's romances. Having said this, such statements seem to be less of a drive to achieve a creative, innovative work from an individual author and more of an attempt to set down in writing, to establish a permanent record of, existing literary compositions in the vernacular, whether they are of oral and/or literate origins. That Chrétien makes no effort to name, to fix an identity to, his individual romances offers further support to this view.

Composed at approximately the same time as Chrétien's Arthurian romances, the *lais* of Marie de France seem to include a much more uniform programme of prologues and epilogues. As with Chrétien, the first and last lines of each of the twelve *lais* are given over to descriptive differentiation and/or identification of the text. In Marie's *lais*, however, these descriptions are consistently used to frame the primary subject: for instance, after a brief account of the Bretons and the *lais* they composed, the remaining opening lines of *Equitan* provide a topical indication of the story that follows:

Un ent firent, k'oï cunter,
Ki ne fet mie a ubliër,
D'Equitan, ki mut fu curteis,
Sire des Nauns, jostise e reis.⁷⁴

⁷³ Chrétien de Troyes, *The Knight with the Lion (Yvain)*, in *Arthurian Romances*, ed. and trans. William W. Kibler (London and New York: Penguin, 1991), pp. 295-380 (p. 380). All further references in Modern English are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

⁷⁴ Marie de France, *Equitan*, in *Les Lais de Marie de France*, ed. Jean Rychner (Paris: Champion, 1966), pp. 33-43 (ll. 9-12). All further references in Old French are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

One of them, which I have heard recited, should not be forgotten. It concerns Equitan, a most courtly man, lord of Nantes, justiciary and king.⁷⁵

The final lines of the *lai* comprise an assertion of its authenticity and a recapitulative synopsis of the story:

Issi avint cum dit vus ai.
Li Bretun en firent un lai,
D'Equitan cument il fina,
E la dame kit ant l'ama.
(ll. 311-14)

All this happened as I have described. The Bretons composed a lay on this subject, about how Equitan died and about the lady who loved him so dearly. (p. 60)

Marking out the beginnings and ends of the *lais* and summarizing the events that occur between, these descriptive frames serve as both situational indicators and as mnemonic aids in oral/aural performative/receptive settings. These frames allow the *lais* to fit coherently within a sequence on the manuscript page (as they do in Harley 978); equally, however, they enable the individual composition to stand alone, as they were likely to, in performance.

Descriptions of circumstances, contents and genre are not the only type of internal titling practice employed in the *lais*. Unlike Chrétien, Marie supplies names for the majority – that is, eight out of the twelve – of her *lais*. At the beginning of *Milun*, for example, the reader/listener is told:

Ici comenceraï *Milun*
E musteraï par brief sermon
Pur quei e coment fu trovez
Li lais ki issi est numez.⁷⁶

I shall now begin *Milun* and explain in a few words for what reason and under what conditions the lay which bears the name was composed.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Marie de France, *Equitan*, in *The 'Lais' of Marie de France*, trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby, 2nd edn. (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 56-60 (p. 56). All further references in Modern English are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

⁷⁶ Marie de France, *Milun*, in Rychner, *Les Lais de Marie de France*, pp. 126-42 (ll. 5-8). All further references in Old French are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

⁷⁷ Marie de France, *Milun*, in Burgess and Busby, *The 'Lais' of Marie de France*, pp. 97-104 (p. 97). All further references in Modern English are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

Singular designations such as this are also found at the end of *Le Fresne*, ‘[l]e lai del *Freisne* en unt trové/Pur la dame l’umt si numé’, and the beginning of *Les Deus Amanz*, ‘[d]e *Deus Amanz* reçuit le nun’, and, when viewed together, appear to represent an attempt to fix a textual identity for each individual *lai*.⁷⁸ The namings provided in the other five *lais*, however, problematize this reading. Indeed, by supplying alternative names – *Eliduc/Guildeluëc ha Guilliadun* and *Le Chaitivell/Les Quatre Deuls* – and by multiplying the names through translation – *Chievrefoil/Gotelef*, *Bisclavret/Garwalf* and *Laüstic/Russignol/Nihtegale* – the epilogues and prologues to the *lais* seem to ‘gestur[e] towards the provisionality, mutability, and the inadequacy of acts of naming [...] at this time.’⁷⁹

A reconsideration of these apparent acts of naming shows that, in all cases, the identity (or identities) of the *lai*, whether of the designative or descriptive variety, are presented as beyond the author’s control. Marie herself does not confer the names; as the namings in *Milun*, *Le Fresne* and *Le Deus Amanz* above suggest, they are already given. They are, as the prologue to *Laüstic* indicates, names which originate with the sources:

Une aventure vus dirai
 Dunt li Bretun firent un lai
Laüstic ad nun, ceo m’est vis,
 Si l’apelent en lur païs;
 Ceo est « russignol » en franceis
 E « nihtegale » en dreit engleis.⁸⁰

I shall relate an adventure to you from which the Bretons composed a lay. *Laüstic* is its name, I believe, and that is what the Bretons call it in their land. In French the title is *Rossignol*, and Nightingale is the correct English word.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Marie de France, *Fresne*, in Rychner, *Les Lais de Marie de France*, pp. 44-60 (ll. 517-8); Marie de France, *Deus Amanz*, in Rychner, *Les Lais de Marie de France*, pp. 93-101 (l. 6). All further references in Old French are to these editions and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

⁷⁹ The Old French titles here are taken from Rychner, *Les Lais de Marie de France*; Victoria Louise Gibbons, ‘Reading Premodern Titles: Bridging the Premodern Gap in Modern Titology’, *Signs, Symbols & Words: Proceedings of the Cardiff University Reading Conference 2007* (2008), 1-13 (p. 8). Available at: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/chri/researchpapers/pgconference/Papers%201%20-%207/1.Gibbons.html> [accessed 21 October 2009].

⁸⁰ Marie de France, *Laüstic*, in Rychner, *Les Lais de Marie de France*, pp. 120-5 (ll. 1-6). All further references in Old French are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

And, as *Chaitivel's* prologue intimates, they are the names by which the *lais* commonly circulate:

Le Chaitivel l'apelet hum,
E si i ad plusurs de cues
Ki l'apelent *Les Quatre Deuls*.⁸²

It is generally called *Le Chaitivel* (The Unhappy One'), but many people call it *Les Quatre Deuls* ('The Four Sorrows').⁸³

These internal namings are not as determinative as those which occur within the *Ormulum*. They are not of Marie's choosing nor are they, as the dual names of *Chaitivel* show, singular and stable.

The improbability of such fixed names within oral-literate culture is underscored at the close of *Chaitivel* as an implicit attempt to fix its name is put into the mouths of the characters:

Pur c'ert li lais de mei nomez:
Le Chaitivel iert apelez.
Ki *Quatre Dols* le numera
Sun proper nun li changera.
— Par fei, fete le, ceo m'est bel:
Or l'apelum *Le Chaitivel*!
(ll. 225-30)

'Therefore the lay will be named after me and called *The Unhappy One*. Anyone who calls it *The Four Sorrows* will be changing its true name.' 'Upon my word,' she replied, 'I am agreeable to this: let us now call it *The Unhappy One*.' (p. 108)

Yet, the knight and his lady's joint decision on a single, appropriate, permanent name for the *lai* are immediately undercut by the narrative voice of the epilogue, which states:

Ici kil porterent avant,
Quatre Dols l'apelent alquant;
Chescuns des nuns bien i afiert,
Kar la matire le requiert;

⁸¹ Marie de France, *Laiüstic*, in Burgess and Busby, *The 'Lais' of Marie de France*, pp. 93-6 (p. 93). All further references in Modern English are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

⁸² Marie de France, *Chaitivel*, in Rychner, *Les Lais de Marie de France*, pp. 143-50 (ll. 6-8). All further references in Old French are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

⁸³ Marie de France, *Chaitivel*, in Burgess and Busby, *The 'Lais' of Marie de France*, pp. 105-8 (p. 105). All further references in Modern English are to this edition and are given in the text, unless otherwise indicated.

Le Chaitivel ad nun en us.
(ll. 233-7)

Some of those who put it into circulation call it *The Four Sorrows*. Each name is appropriate and supported by the subject matter. It is commonly known as *The Unhappy One*. (p. 108)

Following, as it does, an effort to fix a text's identity, the flexibility of naming outlined in this epilogue seems to serve as a comment on the futility – as it is both unattainable (multiple names will circulate regardless) and unnecessary (as both names are apposite) – of such a goal. In this way, the multiple, changeable namings within the *lais* can be seen to be representative of textual naming at this time. The names of premodern texts are subject to change during their transmission and reception; as a consequence, the identity of texts lies in the hand of its readers/listeners rather than the author, with those who receive and disseminate the text rather than with those who create it.

In spite of this designative fluidity, there is a tendency for criticism on the *lais* to present and interpret these namings as titles. In her study of textual identity in the *lais*, for instance, Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner asserts that '[w]hile in general it may be correct to say that medieval works, with few exceptions do not have titles in the modern sense, the *lais* seem to constitute one of the exceptions'.⁸⁴ Yet, at no point, do Marie's prologues and epilogues supply titles – that is, fixed, authorial, undisputed names – for the *lais*. The conflation of these textual namings with titles can be partly attributed to the misleading presentations offered by modern editions and translations. As many of the quotations above illustrate, some editions and translations choose to italicize (as did those of Chrétien's romances) certain words that correspond with the titles that have now been stabilized in relation to the *lais*. Furthermore, while the relatively rare Old French word *title* is found nowhere within the text of the *lais*, the Modern English equivalent *title* is frequently found within translations as the quotation from *Laüstic* above, where Burgess and Busby add the

⁸⁴ Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, p. 178.

word *title* into their translation, illustrates. Titles, with their connotations of fixity, authorial origins, stability, agreement, representativeness, and so on, have no place within the *lais*. Names, as the frequency of variations on the words *nun* (meaning *name*) and *apelent* (meaning *are called*) attest, however, do.

Examples of internal forms of textual naming can be found elsewhere in the medieval literary corpus. In the prologue to Robert Mannyng's late thirteenth-/early fourteenth-century translation/adaptation of William of Waddington's *Manuel des Pechiez*, for example, the narrator asserts that '[m]en clepyn þe bokë "handlyng synne"'.⁸⁵ The sixty lines that follow this statement are taken up by an exposition of the reasons for and pertinence of this name. While this passage could be seen as an early example of a text's name functioning as a guide to the work, its formulaic quality – that it is a generic description and, furthermore, a translation – means that it stands at some distance from the single, exclusive proper name a modern title provides. The prologue to Reginald Pecock's *Donet* of the mid-fifteenth century contains a comparable act of internal naming:

[a]nd sithen it is so, that this book berith himself toward the hool ful kunnyng of Goddis lawe, even as the comoun *Donet* in Latyn berith himself toward the hool ful kunnyng of grammer (as is it wel knowun of clerkis in Latyn), therfore this present dialog myghte wel and convenientli be clepid the *Donet* or "key" of goddis lawe, or ellis the *Donet* or "key" of Cristen religioun.⁸⁶

A *donet* or *donat* (from the name of the Latin grammarian Donatus) was the standard name for a grammar book or indeed any sort of instructional treatise during the Middle Ages. The identification that Pecock provides in his prologue, then, is not so much a designation as it is a genre indication. Nonetheless, there is some attempt in each work to identify the work, albeit loosely, through internal verbal means.

⁸⁵ Robert Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne*, in *Robert Brunne's "Handlyng Synne": Part 1*, ed. Frederick Furnivall, Early English Text Society, o. s. 119 (London: Kegan Paul, 1901), l. 80.

⁸⁶ Reginald Pecock, 'Prologue to the *Donet*', in Wogan-Browne, *The Idea of the Vernacular*, pp. 98-101 (ll. 1-5).

One of the more famous examples of the internal naming of a text is found at the beginning of Guillaume de Lorris' section of *Le Roman de la Rose* composed at some point during the 1230s. The situation is reminiscent of Marie's *Chaitivel* as it is the narrator who gives voice to the question of the text's name:

E se nus ne nule demande
 Coment je vueil que li romanz
 Soit apelez que je comenz
 Ce est li Romanz de la Rose,
 Ou l' Art d' Amors est toute enclose.⁸⁷

And so if any man or woman should ask what I wish this romance, which I now begin, to be called, it is the *Romance of the Rose*, in which the whole art of love is contained.⁸⁸

What seems to be an analogous situation of textual naming is found within the final lines of the late fifteenth-century dream poem *The Assembly of Ladies*. Again, the concern for naming is voiced by the narrator, who imagines being asked the name of her book:

But tel me now what ye the booke do cal,
 For me must wite.' 'With right goode wil ye shal:
 As for this booke, to sey yow verray right
 And of the name to tel the certeynte,
 "La semble de Dames", thus it hight;
 Now think ye that the name is?' 'Goode parde!'⁸⁹

While in *Le Roman de la Rose* the possibility of someone asking the name of the text is only hypothetical, in *The Assembly of Ladies* the naming of the text is presented as a requisite part of the compositional process. In this way, the closing words of *The Assembly of Ladies* would seem to contain a more fixed act of naming than that which is found in the opening lines of *Le Roman de la Rose*. Two further examples from the late medieval period, however, cast a different light on this particular type of textual naming.

⁸⁷ Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Ernest Langlois (Paris: Champion, 1920), II. 34-8.

⁸⁸ Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 3.

⁸⁹ *The Assembly of Ladies*, in *The Floure and the Leafe; The Assembly of Ladies; The Isle of Ladies*, ed. Dereak Pearsall (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1990), pp. 29-62 (ll. 748-53)

Both Thomas Usk's *The Testament of Love* and the anonymous *Spektakle of Luf*, of the late fourteenth and late fifteenth century respectively, appear to be named determinatively within their prologues. While one is 'cleped the *Testament of Love*' because it is 'of love, and the pryme causes of sterynge in that doynge, with passyons and dyseases for wantynge of desyre', the other is 'intillit and callit *The Spectakle of Luf*' because 'in it apperis and schawis sum evillis and myshappis that cummys to men thairthrow, as the filth or [sp]ottis of the face shawis in the myrrour of glas.'⁹⁰ The attempt to fix an appropriate name and so an identity to these works seems clear here; the *Spektakle of Luf*'s use of the word 'intillit', in particular, seems to affirm this connection, evoking as it does the composite (that is, descriptive, claimiative, and designative) sense of *title*, or rather *entitling*, identified earlier in the thesis. Yet, as Helen Phillips suggests in her essay on framed narratives, there is still a formulaic quality to this sort of naming.⁹¹ These are assemblies, testaments, mirrors, and, beyond the examples considered above, dreams, parliaments, courts, palaces, houses, temples, and books – which is, perhaps, as much as to say they are 'volumes', 'anthologies', 'framed narratives', or similar – on the subject of love, ladies, fame, pleasure, honour, jealousy, and so on.⁹² This sort of internal naming, therefore, can be reconsidered as generic and descriptive form of textual identification. Having said this, there is little doubt that these kinds of internal textual names, which are so popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, bear a striking resemblance to modern-day titles, particularly in terms of their apparent authorial origins, but for now, they lie beyond this study's temporal parameters.

Medieval acts of naming, whether they occur in a literate vernacular text like the *Ormulum*, in oral-literate vernacular texts such as Marie's *lais*, or in later texts such as *Le*

⁹⁰ Thomas Usk, 'The Testament of Love: Prologue', in Wogan-Browne, *Idea of the Vernacular*, pp. 29-31 (ll. 65, 63-5); 'The Spektakle of Luf: Prologue', in Wogan-Browne, *Idea of the Vernacular*, pp. 206-7 (ll. 42, 42-4).

⁹¹ Helen Phillips, 'Frames and Narrators in Chaucerian Poetry', in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, ed. Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), pp. 71-97 (p. 71).

⁹² These thoughts build on the arguments of Phillips, 'Frame Narratives' and have been aided greatly by our recent discussions of them.

Roman de la Rose or *The Assembly of Ladies*, are multiple, fluid, motile, and so represent, this thesis argues, something quite different to modern acts of titling which seek to singularize, stabilize and fix. These conceptual and practical disparities can be seen to indicate a further rift between medieval and modern ideas of textual identity. According to Zumthor, the implications arising from the widespread lack of titles are relatively straightforward:

[t]here is, surely, one remarkably clear indication of this fundamental lack of the work's identity in the scarcity of titles. [...] Manuscripts dating from before the fourteenth century, which provide an overall description of the following text, do so by means of a discursive expression, which can in no way fulfil the function of postmedieval titles, which is to be a proper name forming part of a code superimposed on that of the work itself. It acts rather as a situational indicator projected into the material existence of the parchment. It is as if the voice has been transformed and immobilized in writing.⁹³

While Zumthor takes account of descriptive forms of internal titling practices here, he fails to consider designative forms, which can provide, if they do not necessarily fix, textual identity. The inclusion of internal, textual names within some medieval vernacular compositions suggests that the idea that a literary text might have an identity did have currency, but, like the names themselves, that this was a multiple, fluid, motile concept. Rather than trying to locate a single, rigid identity for a medieval text, it may be more appropriate to speak, once again, in plurals: that is, to identify the possibility of various, different *identities* for a medieval text.

The growing range of external and internal titling practices in the late eleventh, twelfth and early thirteenth centuries that this chapter has mapped suggests that there was increasing awareness among those who composed, produced, transmitted and received vernacular literature of both its linguistic and literary distinctiveness. The growth in the paratextual and textual means for distinguishing and/or identifying vernacular texts during

⁹³ Zumthor, *Medieval Poetics*, p. 48. Part of this quotation appears in the first chapter: 'Modern Titology and Its Premodern Gap' (p. 65).

this period indicates a burgeoning sense that they represented a literature at a distance, however far, from Latin. Indeed, the concurrent development of visually and orally-oriented forms of titling practice can be seen as an attempt to accommodate the transitional oral-literate state of many vernacular compositions. As this chapter has shown, the development of titling practices intersects with a number of wider (para)textual issues including layout, identity, authority, and integrity. The expansion of external and internal titling practices after the Conquest, therefore, can also be read as an indication of the beginnings of a specifically vernacular range of *mise-en-pages* and textual identities, or, combining these together, a variety of distinctively vernacular textualities.

5 Later Medieval Titling: Into the Fourteenth Century

The expansion of vernacular titling practices, and the associated development of variation in vernacular *mise-en-pages*, textual identities and textualities, continues throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Existing practices, whether internal, external, verbal, non-verbal, decorative, practical, or a combination of all or just some of these, gain increasing momentum during these centuries. As the literary use of vernacular languages becomes more common in England and France, as greater numbers of manuscripts, particularly those containing vernacular texts, are produced, and as manuscript collections, miscellanies, and anthologies become a familiar, even preferred, form of codex, the methods for distinguishing and/or identifying compositions become more numerous and varied, and appear to have a wider range of functions. The reasons for this increase and its manner and effects are at the centre of the following chapter.

The preceding chapter has shown that considering early medieval (para)textual titling practices within their wider manuscript contexts can shed new light not only on the development of titling, or what this thesis refers to as the title's prehistory, but also on the texts and manuscripts created, produced, transmitted and received during this period, and, further still, on modern perceptions of and attitudes to these titling practices, texts and manuscripts. As in chapter four, the diachronic scope narrows in this chapter. Building on chapter four's combination of diachronic and synchronic considerations, this chapter sets detailed synchronic considerations within an overall diachronic frame. By reducing its diachronic range even further, the thesis tries to achieve a unity of focus which generally eludes studies deploying a 'project-oriented' theoretical approach.¹ Paul Strohm's *Theory and the Premodern Text* serves as a case in point. Its central premise is that theory can open out a range of new interpretive possibilities in the reading of premodern texts, and it is this range

¹ Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. xi.

which Strohm explores as he moves his consideration from Hoccleve's *Male Regle* to Malory's 'Knight of the Cart'. In contrast, the specific focus of this thesis, premodern titling practices, means that the material it considers is already much more unified. By concentrating on three individual cases of manuscript titling practice, however, and relating these particular examples out to the evolution of titling practice more generally, the thesis can be said to achieve an even greater specificity of focus.

After a brief examination of a selection of early to mid-thirteenth century English and French manuscripts and their various internal/external practices of titling, the chapter will consider the titling practices of three manuscript compilations dating from the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These manuscripts are Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86, 'a layman's common-place book or miscellany [...] originally compiled towards the end of the thirteenth century'; Scotland, National Library, Advocates' 19. 2. 1 (the Auchinleck manuscript), 'one of the most important surviving manuscripts of medieval English poetry' from the early fourteenth century; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Eng. poet. a. 1 (the Vernon manuscript), 'the biggest surviving volume of Middle English writings', dated to the final decades of the fourteenth century.² Taken together, the Digby, Auchinleck and Vernon manuscripts offer a cross-section of the titling practices, texts and manuscripts current in England in the late medieval period, and, in this way, they can be seen to provide a preliminary overview of the interrelated development of texts and paratexts at this time. Taken individually, however, these manuscripts illustrate the peculiarities that characterize the composition, production, transmission and reception of (para)texts in this period and so refute any generalization and/or limitation of them.

² Judith Tschann and M. B. Parkes, 'Introduction', *Facsimile of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86*, Early English Text Society, s.s. 16 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. xi-lxii (p. xi); Derek Pearsall and I. C. Cunningham, 'Introduction', *The Auchinleck Manuscript: National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS. 19. 2. 1* (London: Scolar, 1979), pp. vii-xvii (p. vii); A. I. Doyle, 'Introduction', *The Vernon Manuscript: A Facsimile of Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. Poet. a. 1* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987), pp. 1-16 (p. 1).

5.1 Case Study I: Manuscripts of the Thirteenth Century

5.1.1 Internal/External Titling in Some Thirteenth-Century Manuscripts

Thus far, the thesis has considered external and internal forms of titling as separate, self-contained, distinctive practices. Yet closer examination of some manuscripts in which these practices are found shows that the distinction between the two, the inclusion of either one or the other, is not always as stringent and clear cut as this. This is particularly the case with those manuscripts dating from the thirteenth century onwards. The last chapter argued that external titling was the product of literate-oriented forms of textuality; such paratextual practices were considered as part of a text (and sometimes an entire manuscript) designed to be seen, read, and used. Internal titling, on the other hand, was seen to result from textualities (particularly those emergent vernacular ones) with a stronger oral/aural orientation, whether of the residual compositional or projected performative variety; these textual practices were seen to operate within a text (and manuscript) made with performance, listening and memory in mind. But, as the single manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 1) containing the *Ormulum* – a liturgical guide designed for both personal reading and briefer consultation, for public recital and aural reception – shows, these textualities begin to overlap and merge, they become inextricable in the production of vernacular (both English and French) literature in the later Middle Ages.

Just as two different textual modes, oral and literate, converge to produce an oral-literate type of text, the different kinds of paratextual code fuse to form an oral-literate type of layout. The amalgamation of textualities that takes place during the transcription of vernacular works is apparent in the use of both internal and external titling practices to differentiate and/or identify compositions – for example, prologues and *incipit*-headings, epilogues and offset *explicit*s. This conjunction of textual modes becomes increasingly visible in titling practices during the thirteenth century. A particularly good place to start the

discussion of this (para)textual titling, therefore, is with the more than forty manuscript witnesses to Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian romances considered at the end of chapter four. As is often the case for medieval works, no manuscripts survive from the period in which Chrétien was writing: that is, sometime during the second half of the twelfth century. The earliest extant copies of his works date from the very end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries.³ Only two manuscripts survive which contain all five of Chrétien's romances: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 794 (the Guiot manuscript) and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 1450. Both are datable to this period of manuscript production; indeed, the transcription and compilation of these two romance collections can be dated to the second quarter of the thirteenth century.⁴

Named by the modern editors for its scribe, the Guiot manuscript is a large collection of romances comprising 'a thematically arranged sequence of chivalric romances' which includes Chrétien's romances, alongside Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Le roman de Troie*, Wace's *Le roman de Brut*, the anonymous *Athis et Prophilias*, and both of the *Continuations to Perceval*.⁵ In this manuscript each romance begins at the top of a new column with a six- to eight-line decorated initial, and ends with an offset *explicit*. Examples are 'Explicyt le romans/derec z denyde' (fol. 27^r) or 'Explicyt le ch[e]v[a]ll[ier] au lyon' (fol. 105^r), for example) in the ink of the text.⁶ In this manuscript external titling practices, both verbal and non-verbal, work together with the internal prologues and epilogues which mark many of the romances (including those of Wace and Benoît, as well as Chrétien's) to distinguish and/or identify the contents of the volume.

³ For a detailed catalogue of Chrétien's manuscripts arranged in order of date attribution, see Terry Nixon, 'Catalogue', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. Keith Busby *et al.* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), II. 18-85.

⁴ This thesis draws in the dates given to the manuscripts of Chrétien's romances in Nixon, 'Catalogue', pp. 28-33.

⁵ Nixon, 'Catalogue', p. 29.

⁶ However, these initials do not appear in the expected places (that is, fols 394^v and 430^v) for the *Continuations*.

The other manuscript containing all of Chrétien's romances is Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 1450. This is another substantial collection of romances 'arranged along a historical line', which includes Wace's *Brut*, into the middle of which Chrétien's romances are inserted as a group, as well as Benoît's *Troie*, the anonymous *Le roman d'Enéas*, and Herbert's *Dolopathos*.⁷ As in the Guiot manuscript, the beginning of each work is marked by a large decorative initial (with the exception of Benoît's *Troie*) and many of the romances, particularly Chrétien's, start at the top of a column; unlike the Guiot manuscript, however, a contemporaneous programme of verbal headings is not included. Furthermore, the interpolation of Chrétien's romances within Wace's *Brut* in Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 1450 creates a quite different situation with regards to its internal titling practices. Firstly, additional differentiation and identification is needed in order to contextualize this insertion; several extra verses are added at the beginning and end of the insertion to 'explain that the romances describe the deeds of the knights of King Arthur, about whom Wace is speaking'.⁸ Secondly, the original prologue to *Erec et Enide*, which begins the interpolated sequence, and that of *Le Conte du Graal* are suppressed so as to ease their integration into the *Brut*'s history. The careful assimilation and chronological arrangement of French literary material evident in Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 1450, and to a slightly lesser extent the thematic organization of the Guiot manuscript, indicates, as Nixon puts it, 'a changed perception of the accumulated French literature and a new desire to arrange this literary heritage in relevant and accessible written *corpora*'.⁹ In their coalition of internal and external titling practices, these early thirteenth-century manuscripts can be seen to herald the beginnings of an increasingly literate-oriented corpus of French vernacular writings.

⁷ Nixon, 'Romance Collections and the Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes', in Busby, *Manuscripts of Chrétien*, I. 17-25 (p. 23).

⁸ Nixon, 'Catalogue', p. 31.

⁹ Nixon, 'Romance Collections', p. 24. For similar sentiments regarding the shift from aural/oral to written reception, see Busby, 'Text, Miniature, and Rubric in the *Continuations* of Chrétien's *Perceval*', in Busby, *Manuscripts of Chrétien*, I. 365-76 (pp. 365-6, 376).

As the manuscript tradition of Chrétien's romances develops across the thirteenth century, it is possible to see a gradual prioritization of visual considerations in the production/reception of vernacular texts. This is borne out by the subsequent verbal additions to the Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 1450 manuscript's programme of external titling practices. Later in the thirteenth century a series of *incipit*-headings are added to the upper margins of the first folio of each romance: for example, 'Chi commenche l[i] remans de cliges' (fol. 188^v) or 'Chi co[m]menche li remans des rois z des barons de bretaingne z de leur fais' (fol. 225^r).¹⁰ The high, offset positioning of these headings seems to be motivated in part by the availability of space (they are, after all, appendages), but the extremity of this positioning, which results in the cropping of some at a later stage in the manuscript's history (as on fol. 207^v, for example), and the emphasis on their visibility also implies the growing practicality of these verbal headings, their increasing functionality as navigational tools.

A comparable combination of internal and external titling practices can be discerned in manuscripts of an English provenance, albeit of a slightly later date. London, British Library, Harley 978, the only manuscript to contain all twelve of Marie de France's *lais*, is a good example here. A composite miscellany dating from the mid-thirteenth century, Harley 978 contains a vast range of material (including musical, medical, and literary texts) in English, Latin and French.¹¹ In this way, it constitutes a very different type of manuscript from those of Chrétien's romances considered above. In spite of these differences, a programme of titling practices similar to that found in Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 1450 is apparent in the section or, as Rupert T. Pickens convincingly argues, the 'booklet' holding

¹⁰ However, there are no headings for *Le roman d'Enéas* (fol. 83^r) and *Dolopathos* (fol. 238^r)

¹¹ For a detailed list of Harley 978's contents, see C. L. Kingsford, 'Introduction', *The Song of Lewes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1890), pp. vii-xxxvi (pp. xi-xvii). For useful summaries, see Andrew Taylor, *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and Their Readers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2002), p. 84; Rupert T. Pickens, 'Reading Harley 978: Marie de France in Context', in *Courtly Arts and the Art of Courtliness: Selected Papers from the Eleventh Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 29 July-4 August 2004*, ed. Keith Busby and Christopher Kleinhenz (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006), pp. 527-42.

Marie's *lais*.¹² Initially, the only form of external titling practice which served to differentiate and/or identify this sequence was non-verbal: two- to five-line initials in blue with red decorative penwork appear slightly offset at the beginning of each.¹³ This was supplemented with a particularly thorough programme of internal titling practices. As well as the prologues and epilogues which frame each of the *lais*, Harley 978 supplies an additional prologue, now widely referred to as the *General Prologue*, which is not attested, unlike the individual prologues/epilogues, by any other of the manuscript witnesses.¹⁴ In her study of textual identity in the *lais*, Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner argues that this *General Prologue* gives an overall unity and so a collective identity to the Harley 978 sequence. This unity and identity, however, pertains only when the manuscript is viewed and read as an entire textual unit and not when individual *lais* or parts of them are excerpted for public recital which may, given the portable size of the miscellany (measuring roughly five by eight inches), have been one part of its envisaged or actual uses.¹⁵ Against the classification of internal titling practices as an oral/aural device, the Harley manuscript's extra internal titling practice can be seen to provide a specifically literate frame for Marie's oral-literate *lais*.

To this original programme of non-verbal external and internal titling practices a later hand adds, as also in the Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 1450 manuscript, a series of external verbal practices. These headings comprise an opening paraph and an early nominative heading – that is, a heading which gives the *lai* a name – in the vernacular ((‘¶Cheuerefoil’ (fol. 150^v) or ‘¶Guygemar’ (fol. 118^v), for example). These names appear to have been drawn from the internal textual naming by a subsequent reader/owner of the manuscript.

¹² Building on the findings of Taylor, Pickens suggests that the sections of Harley 978 containing Marie's fables and *lais* were copied as independent units that were assembled shortly after transcription: see Pickens, 'Reading Harley 978'. For Taylor's earlier argument, see Taylor, *Textual Situations*, pp. 76-136.

¹³ The exception here is *Guigemar* where an entire three-line column space remains unfilled instead.

¹⁴ There are four other manuscripts containing two or more of Marie's *lais*: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, nouv. acq. fr. 1104; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 2168; London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian B. xiv; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 24432.

¹⁵ Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 157-206. For a discussion of the portability of Harley 978 and its implications, see Taylor, *Textual Situations*, pp. 94-5.

Again, the location of these headings – in the very upper margins, above the relevant column – and the fact that they are rubricated suggests a practical function. They help the reader/user to find their way through the collection and locate specific *lais*. What is particularly striking, though, is the fact that no heading is given to the *General Prologue* or to the sequence of *lais* in its entirety. This suggests that, while the intended purpose of this booklet was perhaps of a more continuous, literate kind, as the addition of the opening *General Prologue* suggests, its use at some later point was of a more discontinuous, possibly oral-literate variety, as it involved the location and reading/recitation of individual *lais*, as the programme of external headings indicates.

The increasing utility attached to verbal forms of external titling practice – whatever the motivation for their inclusion – is especially apparent in the later manuscripts of Chrétien's romances. Red and blue headings signal the beginning of each romance (although that on fol. 174^r has been cropped) in the Chantilly, Musée Condé, 472 manuscript, a large collection of the middle decades of the thirteenth century which contains Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*, *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, and *Le Chevalier au Lion*, among other works including Renaut de Beaujeu's *Le bel inconnu* and the anonymous *Le Roman de Renart*. At the end of the thirteenth/beginning of the fourteenth century, a regular programme of offset *incipits* and *explicits*, executed in the ink of the text, is employed throughout the extremely large collection Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 375 (MS II), which contains Chrétien's *Cligés* and *Erec et Enide*, alongside Benoît's *Troie*, Wace's *Le roman de Rou*, and the anonymous *Le roman de Thèbes*, among various other works. Further still, a versified table of contents, which corresponds fairly accurately with the order of the texts, appears at the head of this manuscript. Increasing concern for facilitating the use of manuscript volumes, for navigating and accessing their contents, motivates the inclusion and extension of external headings, alongside similarly thorough non-verbal features.

As the manuscripts considered above illustrate, however, the inclusion of extended programmes of verbal and non-verbal external titling practices is rarely at the expense of internal forms. The manuscript tradition of Chrétien's romances, in particular, demonstrates that over time external and internal forms of titling practice come to work together in the differentiation and identification of vernacular French literary texts. It is in these French collections (and in the Middle English anthologies considered later in this chapter) that a complex, evolving oral-literate form of textuality, or what this thesis has referred to as a specifically vernacular textuality, can be best apprehended. As internal and external forms interact increasingly upon the manuscript page, the boundaries between the two begin to blur. When an external heading is in the same script and/or ink as the text or when it forms part of the text's rhyme scheme or metre, it is hard to determine whether it is separate from or a part of that text: do the categories of internal and external apply in these instances and is a differentiation between the two necessary? When a miniature, something which might be considered a non-verbal form of titling practice, is found mid-way through a work, as is the case, for example, with the copy of *La Estorie del Evangelie* in the late fourteenth-century Vernon manuscript, it is difficult to know whether a strict division between image and text is applicable: should the division be considered significant or is it more productive, given their inclusion alongside the text rather than the paratext, to consider them together? Although this study has tried to avoid establishing a typology of premodern titling practice, the discussion so far has set out distinctions and categories, highlighted differences and similarities, in order to facilitate discussion. But, as the above discussion and the case studies which follow illustrate, titling practices in the premodern period constantly transcend and confute any boundaries that are drawn. The fluidity, permeability and mutability of these practices reappears throughout and is indeed characteristic of the manuscript case studies with which this study concludes.

5.1.2 Late Thirteenth-Century Titling Practices: The Case of Digby 86

The first extended study of a single manuscript's titling practices focuses on Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86. Compiled during the latter part of the thirteenth century, perhaps around 1280, this substantial miscellany has been noted for its exceptional character when viewed against other extant manuscripts from this period of English provenance, and it presents no less an intriguing case for titological study.¹⁶ Part of the special status of Digby 86 lies in the fact that it is a trilingual volume: roughly half of its texts are written in French, a quarter in Latin, and the other quarter in English. The highly miscellaneous nature of its contents has regularly attracted scholars' attention.¹⁷ Containing a little over one hundred texts, Digby 86 comprises an astonishing (to the modern eye, at least) variety of material which ranges from the religious (*Chauncoun de noustre dame*) to the profane (*La vie de vn vallet amorous*), from the instructional (*Le medicinal des oiseus*) to the recreational (*Ragemon le bon*), from medical lore (items seven and fifteen) to antifeminist writing (*Le lai du corn*), from prayers (*Les vii saumes*) and saints' lives (of St Nicholas and St Eustace) to dream visions (*Le Songe d'enfer*) and fabliaux (*Dame Sirip*).¹⁸

Though its contents are extremely diverse, three recent studies, two by Marilyn Corrie and one by Thorlac Turville-Petre, have shown that their inclusion and arrangement is far from arbitrary. In both of her articles, Corrie argues that the compiler of Digby 86 arranges

¹⁶ John Frankis notes the 'eccentric' nature of Digby 86 in Frankis, 'The Social Context of Vernacular Writing in Thirteenth-Century England: The Evidence of the Manuscripts', in *Thirteenth Century England: Proceeding of the Newcastle upon Tyne Conference 1985*, ed. P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1986), I. 175-84 (p. 182).

¹⁷ Frankis, for example, remarks on the 'truly' miscellaneous quality of the Digby manuscript's contents: see 'Social Context', p. 182. For similar comments, see Marilyn Corrie, 'Harley 2253, Digby 86, and the Circulation of Literature in Pre-Chaucerian England', in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, ed. Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), pp. 427-43 (pp. 429-30); Thorlac Turville-Petre, 'Oxford Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86: A Thirteenth-Century Commonplace Book in its Social Context', in *Family and Dynasty in Late Medieval England: Proceedings of the 1997 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Richard Eales and Shaun Tyes (Donington: Shaun Tyes, 2003), pp. 56-66 (p. 57).

¹⁸ The thesis adopts the headings given in the manuscript where possible here. Where no heading is given it follows the preferred modern titles or item numbers provided by Tschann and Parkes, 'Introduction', pp. xii-xxxvi.

the texts along formal and linguistic lines.¹⁹ For Turville-Petre, as for the editors of the facsimile Judith Tschann and M. B. Parkes before him, thematic associations also play a part, as the grouping of antifeminist works which follow the *Kalendar* or the parallel collections of proverbial wisdom found from fols 140^v to 149^v illustrate.²⁰ As Corrie and Turville-Petre both suggest, the manuscript appears to have been assembled from a series of separate booklets into which texts with formal, linguistic and/or thematic links were grouped over a period of several years (between approximately 1271 and 1283): although the structure of these booklets would have been dependent, ultimately, on the types of material available for copying at a particular time.²¹

An explanation for this method of compilation and the extreme linguistic and topical range it produces lies in what is known and what is generally supposed about the history of Digby 86. The manuscript is widely understood to be of Worcestershire provenance, written either by or for a member of the landholding class. B. D. H. Miller and, more recently, Tschann and Parkes have argued persuasively that the main scribe, who writes all but two quires of the manuscript, was a member of the Grimhill household.²² Set within this social context, Digby 86 can be seen as an early example of a commonplace book: that is, a miscellany made for or by a particular person or group of people. The organizing, if not necessarily unifying, principles behind Digby 86, therefore, are the interests, requirements (educational and domestic), activities (daily and recreational), and wellbeing (spiritual and physical) of a family of the gentry, at least some of whom appear to have been competent in three languages. According to Turville-Petre, Digby 86 is ‘a collection made for the use and

¹⁹ Corrie, ‘The Compilation of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86’, *Medium Ævum*, 66 (1997), 236-49; Corrie, ‘Circulation of Literature’.

²⁰ For Turville-Petre’s description and thematic linking of the contents, see Turville-Petre, ‘MS Digby 86’, p. 58-64. For Tschann and Parkes’s earlier suggestions, see Tschann and Parkes, ‘Introduction’, pp. xli-xlvi.

²¹ For the booklet theory and its elaboration, see Turville-Petre, ‘MS Digby 86’, pp. 57-64. A detailed re-evaluation of Digby 86’s assembly can be found in Corrie, ‘Compilation’.

²² For B. D. H. Miller’s detailed account of the Grimhills, see Miller, ‘The Early History of Bodleian MS Digby 86’, *Annuaire Medievale*, 4 (1963), 23-56. For Tschann and Parkes’s development of the Grimhill connection, see Tschann and Parkes, ‘Introduction’, pp. lvi-lx.

entertainment of the household' and so it 'gives us the opportunity to peer a little way into the interests – literary, cultural, practical, all of them together – of a thirteenth century gentry family.'²³ Viewed in this way, Digby 86 constitutes a very different type of manuscript, particularly in terms of its productive and receptive circumstances, from many of those discussed in the earlier parts of this thesis, and indeed, as John Frankis notices, from many of those that were circulating at (and before) this time.²⁴

As a site of difference as well as continuity, Digby 86 makes for an especially interesting premodern titological study. Although two scribes contribute to the manuscript, Scribe A copies the majority of the text, with Scribe B adding two quires (fols 81-96) which form the middle part of the French translation of Petrus Alphonsi's *Disciplina clericalis*.²⁵ It appears that Scribe A had a major controlling role in the manuscript's production in that he is responsible for all of the decoration, including the enlarged or illuminated initials, *litterae notabiliores* and rough sketches sometimes found in the margins, as well as a fairly consistent programme of rubricated headings. Though the Digby manuscript appears to have been transcribed over a period of several years, it displays a remarkably uniform, though not always particularly attractive or neat, *mise-en-page*. Large red (or red and black) initials, varying in size from two to five lines, mark sections of text throughout the volume; however, these initials do not always correspond with significant textual divisions and this complicates any discussion of them as a non-verbal form of titling practice. This apparent lack of functionality could result from different attitudes to the organization of texts in the Middle Ages, but it might also be the case that the regularity of specifically verbal forms of titling

²³ Turville-Petre, 'MS Digby 86', pp. 57, 65.

²⁴ Frankis, 'Social Context', pp. 182-4.

²⁵ The thesis follows Tschann and Parkes's classification of the hands here: see Tschann and Parkes, 'Introduction', pp. xxxviii-xxxix.

practice within Digby 86 – appearing as they do in connection with seventy (or just short of three quarters) of its hundred and one texts – renders non-verbal forms less necessary.²⁶

In this respect, comparisons with the verbal and non-verbal titling practices of London, British Library, Harley 2253, a slightly later trilingual miscellany from the Shropshire/Herefordshire area, are suggestive. In her own comparative study of the two manuscripts, Corrie observes that Digby 86 is ‘much more consistently rubricated than Harley 2253.’²⁷ To add figures to support Corrie’s evaluation, the single scribe of Harley 2253 supplies headings for only twenty-four (or less than a quarter) of its one hundred and sixteen items. ‘The result’, Corrie argues, ‘is that Digby 86 is a more “user-friendly” manuscript than Harley 2253, with its contents relatively easy to identify and locate.’²⁸ She goes on to draw a number of additional conclusions from the Harley manuscript’s lack of headings:

[i]t must have been problematic [...] for even the copyist of the Harley miscellany to find specific items within his collection; for another user, it would have been virtually impossible. This is not to say that the manuscript could not have been used by others: it could have served as a book for perusal, if not one for the rapid consultation or retrieval of material. But the lack of titles does make one question whether the book was produced with other readers primarily in mind: if it was, its copyist seems to have given no more thought to the practicalities of its use than he did to the attractiveness of its appearance.²⁹

Corrie may overstate her case slightly here. While the provision of headings in Harley 2253 may be sporadic, the execution of other elements of its layout, particularly its initials, paraps and use of space, is much more reliable. A modest programme of red paraps, one- to two-line red (or black touched with red) initials, and blank spaces (of one to five lines) marks the beginnings of texts, as the run of items from folios 54^v to 67^v or folios 106^r to 127^r illustrates. Viewed against the Digby manuscript’s rather more haphazard deployment of non-

²⁶ For the number of texts, the thesis follows Tshann and Parkes’s division of the texts in their description of the Digby 86’s contents: see Tschann and Parkes, ‘Introduction, pp. xii-xxxvi.

²⁷ Corrie, ‘Circulation of Literature’, p. 430.

²⁸ Corrie, ‘Circulation of Literature’, p. 430.

²⁹ Corrie, ‘Circulation of Literature’, pp. 430-1.

verbal practices, Harley 2253's system of non-verbal differentiation and identification appears to be a good deal more user-friendly; indeed, the *mise-en-page* of the Harley manuscript is arguably as functional as the headings of Digby 86. Modern readers may find it difficult to find their way through a manuscript without verbal kinds of distinction or identification, but premodern readers, whether reading/reciting in public or private, clearly could, as the large numbers of vernacular manuscripts without programmes of external headings (of which the early romance collections considered are a prime example) demonstrate.

This is not to dispute Corrie's suggestion that the Digby manuscript's thorough programme of external verbal titling practices aids its use; it is, rather, to point out that they are not the only way of doing so in premodernity. In her assessment of the titling practices of the Harley and Digby manuscripts, Corrie considers verbal forms exclusively. Given the verbal basis of the familiar modern title, this sort of privileging is not entirely surprising. Following Corrie, 'titles' are the best, indeed the only, possible way for a scribe to facilitate better access to and use of her/his miscellany, but, as Harley 2253 and many of the manuscripts this thesis has already considered show, this is not the only, nor is it always the main, way to do so in the transcription of premodern vernacular texts. The layout of texts, their arrangement and presentation on the manuscript page, is an equally (and occasionally more) important method of distinction and/or identification in these early periods. To suggest that the Harley scribe did not have the 'other readers' of her/his manuscript and the 'practicalities of its use' in mind at the time of copying is to overplay the function and status of headings and other verbal titling practices in premodernity.³⁰ In terms of later medieval (and indeed premodern more generally) methods of distinguishing and identifying texts, Digby 86 represents the exception rather than the norm.

³⁰ Corrie, 'Circulation of Literature', p. 430.

While the Digby manuscript is exceptional in terms of the consistency and verbal form of its external titling practices, there seems to be little advance in terms of the information they convey. They are still, to draw on the words of Paul Zumthor once more, ‘overall description[s]’ accomplished through ‘discursive expression[s]’ rather than ‘proper names’.³¹ There is no drive in Digby 86’s external titling practices to name its texts; instead, distinction and identification are provided by descriptive headings. These headings take two main forms: the *incipit*-heading, which usually combines a version of the opening phrase ‘Ci comence’ or ‘Hic sunt’ (meaning ‘Here begins’ or ‘Here is’) with a description of the work (for example, ‘Ci comence le romaunz de temptatioun de secle’ (fol. 182^v) or ‘Hic sunt virtutes scabiose distincte’ (fol. 201^v)) and the generic heading, which frequently consists of a formal- or thematic-centred statement of the work (‘Oracio ad deum’ (fols 26^v, 27^v, 200^v) or ‘Le fablel del gelous’ (fol. 109^v), for example).³² Developing Corrie’s ideas about the pragmatics of Digby 86’s programme of text headings, it appears that it is not just their constant visible presence in relation to texts that was of use to readers, but their form and the type of information they contain also.

That two types of heading predominate in Digby 86 suggests that some thought was put into the mode and content of their inclusion. Take the slightly more predominant *incipit*-heading, for example. A heading in the vein of ‘Ci comence le cuntent par entre le Mauuis et la russinole’ (fol. 136^v) explicitly informs the reader of Digby 86 that a new text is beginning (‘Ci comence’), while also giving an indication of its mode (‘le cuntent’) and subject (‘par entre le Mauuis et la russinole’). This heading not only differentiates and identifies the text but, in so doing, also aids the navigation of the volume. In some cases,

³¹ Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Philip Bennett (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 48.

³² There are other types of heading in Digby 86; for instance, several headings begin with the prepositional phrase ‘de’/‘of’, as discussed in earlier in this thesis, while a number of others combine generic and *incipit* forms.

elements of internal titling practices begin to find their way into these *incipit*-headings, so that ‘Ci comence le romaunz peres aunfour coment il aprist et chaustia sun cher fiz. belement’ (fol. 74^v) or ‘Ci comence le romaunz de enfer le Sounge rauf de hodenge de la voie denfer’ (fol. 97^v) resemble mini-prologues to the texts they anticipate. These sorts of heading perform a descriptive as opposed to a nominative function; they are what Zumthor calls ‘situational indicators’, fulfilling a ‘more emphatic structural role’ in the layout and organisation of Digby 86’s texts.³³ The usually discursive form of these *incipit*-headings is indicative of the oral-literate status of vernacular literature at this time; ‘[i]t is as if’, Zumthor observes, ‘the voice has been transformed and immobilized in writing’.³⁴ This voice, as it is recorded on the manuscript page, positions the reader (and possibly the listener), providing her/him with a selection of preparatory information about the text it introduces.

The generic headings which accompany a significant proportion of the Digby manuscript’s remaining texts fulfil a similar role. Indeed, ‘genre indications’, to borrow Gérard Genette’s useful phrase, also appear as part of the information conveyed in the *incipit*-headings discussed above.³⁵ According to its headings, the Digby manuscript contains the genres of ‘saume’, ‘miracle’, ‘fablel’, ‘lai’, ‘vie’, ‘oreisun’, ‘preere’, ‘prouerbe’, ‘romaunz’ ‘liure’, ‘lettre’, and more. Two points arise from this list. Firstly, the formulaic quality of these headings suggests that identification, of the fixed, exclusive designative variety, is of little concern. Variations on the generic heading ‘oracio ad deum’ (fols 26^v, 27^v, 200^v), ‘oracio ad sanctum mariam’ (fols 28^v, 161^r, 162^r), ‘oracio domini’ (fols 48^v, 204^r), and

³³ Zumthor, *Medieval Poetics*, p. 48; Victoria Louise Gibbons, ‘Reading Premodern Titles: Bridging the Premodern Gap in Modern Titology’, *Signs, Symbols & Words: Proceedings of the Cardiff University Reading Conference 2007* (2008), 1-13 (p. 10). Available at: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/chri/researchpapers/pgconference/Papers%201%20%207/1.Gibbons.html> [accessed 21 October 2009]. For another discussion of the structural roles of premodern titling practices, see Gibbons, ‘The Manuscript Titles of *Truth*: Titology and the Medieval Gap’, *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 11 (2008), 197-206 (p. 202).

³⁴ Zumthor, *Medieval Poetics*, p. 48.

³⁵ Though it borrows Gérard Genette’s phrase, the thesis does not adopt his specifically modern definition: see Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 94-103.

various others appear in connection with several of the Digby manuscript's pieces. In such instances, these generic headings seem to be more indicative than nominative. Secondly, the fluid conception of these generic classifications becomes clear in the contrast between the bawdy subject-matter of the item headed 'Le vie de vn vallet amerous' and the religious narrative of the item headed ('Ci comence la vie nostre dame'). Furthermore, two of the Digby manuscript's similarly focused saints' lives, those of Saint Eustace and Saint Nicholas, are given two different generic indications: 'la vie' and 'les miracles'. The generic flexibility evident in the Digby volume suggests that its genre indications should be taken as just that: as indications, not prescriptions, of genre.

The predominance of situational, descriptive and generic headings within Digby 86 is well-suited to its large number and wide range of contents. These sorts of heading do not only tell readers/orators where one work ends and another begins, but also what kinds of work, what forms, what subjects, are beginning and ending. In a miscellany like Digby 86, these indicative, descriptive, guiding headings would have been, indeed still are, especially valuable. The number and miscellaneity of Digby's contents may explain its comprehensive programme of external headings. There are examples among other extant miscellanies of the period: Oxford, Jesus College, MS 29, a slightly smaller trilingual volume, also copied by a single scribe from the Worcestershire area at roughly the same time as Digby 86, has a programme of external, mostly *incipit*-style headings in connection with at least twenty (as some items begin imperfectly) of its thirty-three items.³⁶ Yet the later, and somewhat larger, miscellany Harley 2253 does without such a system. Given the functionality of the Digby's headings noted by Corrie and elaborated above, it may be as well to look to the uses of the

³⁶ N. R. Ker dates Oxford, Jesus College, MS 29 to the second half of the thirteenth century, see Ker, 'Introduction', *The Owl and the Nightingale: Reproduced in Facsimile from the Surviving Manuscripts, Jesus College, Oxford, 29, and British Museum, Cotton Caligula A. ix*, Early English Text Society, o.s. 251 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. ix-xx (p. ix).

volume, to the circumstances motivating its production and surrounding its reception, for a more credible explanation.

Comparisons with Harley 2253 are again illuminating here. While both Digby 86 and Harley 2253 manuscripts are believed to be of clerical origin, their purposes and destinations appear to have been quite different.³⁷ Whereas the Digby scribe/compiler assembled a practical volume for the edification and recreation of a lay household, the Harley scribe/compiler seems to have had, as Susanna Fein explains, ‘an evident plan towards recitation, performance, or other practical use (such as preaching or counsel)’.³⁸ The contrasting titling practices of these manuscripts offer additional support to these conclusions. An easily navigable manuscript page, in which non-verbal forms of external titling practice – spacing, initials, paraphs – guide the reader/orator through the texts, is complemented by what Fein has shown to be an overwhelming system of internal titling, mainly through the addition of opening and closing lines and linking of texts, in an explicitly oral style.³⁹ That many of these auditory beginnings and endings appear uniquely within the Harley manuscript suggests that it was compiled with its performance and audience in mind.⁴⁰ In Digby 86, on the other hand, it is the rubricated headings, the verbal forms of external titling practice, which provide direction for both reader and orator. Though the Digby is likely to have been read aloud, its smaller format and more crowded layout suggest it was a book designed for private reading and consultation or at least performance of a less formal kind.

³⁷ For the clerical origins of Digby 86, see Frankis, ‘Social Context’, p. 183. For the legal/clerical training of Harley 2253’s scribe/compiler, see Carter Revard, ‘Scribe and Provenance’, in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, ed. Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), pp. 2-109.

³⁸ Susanna Fein, ‘Compilation and Purpose in MS Harley 2253’, in *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the English West Midlands from the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Wendy Scase (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 67-94 (p. 68). Critics who regard Digby 86 as a lay household book include Miller, ‘Early History’; Turville-Petre, ‘MS Digby 86’.

³⁹ Fein, ‘Compilation and Purpose’, pp. 88-91.

⁴⁰ For the idea that the Harley scribe/compiler highlights and possibly even adds these minstrel-like openings/endings, see Fein, ‘Compilation and Purpose’, p. 89.

As the later addition of headings to manuscripts such as *Bibliothèque nationale*, fr. 1450 and Harley 978 and the gradual inclusion of more thorough programmes of headings in manuscripts like Digby 86, Jesus College MS 29, *Bibliothèque nationale*, fr. 375 and the Guiot manuscript indicate, the use of verbal forms of external titling practice becomes more frequent in manuscripts containing French and English during the second half of the thirteenth century. It must be noted that the inclusion of increasingly thorough programmes of external headings in manuscripts of French provenance and containing mainly French vernacular literature occurs at a slightly earlier date than in those manuscripts surveyed so far of an English provenance and which contain works in English, French and Latin. The differences in development here may lie with the contents of the manuscripts and the purpose of their compilation.

The French manuscripts considered above are primarily romance collections, serving as repositories for literature in the vernacular, as records of a specifically French literary heritage (*Musée Condé*, MS 472, *Bibliothèque nationale*, fr. 1450 and fr. 375, and the Guiot manuscript). The texts gathered in these collections are often linked by their themes, forms, genres, and subjects. Furthermore, much emphasis was placed on the physical appearance, whether this was to attract a buyer or to please a patron, to make a presentational copy or achieve a usable book. Verbal headings were just one way of pointing up the intratextual links between a collection's contents, while also addressing its visual, both decorative and practical, requirements.⁴¹ Romance-centred English manuscripts comparable to these French collections do not survive before the middle decades of the fourteenth century (the Auchinleck and Vernon manuscripts, considered below, are prime examples here). Manuscripts produced in England before this time tend to be multilingual compilations of a much more miscellaneous nature (the Harley 978, Digby 86, Harley 2253 manuscripts, for

⁴¹ Non-verbal practices could also serve to unify and present the contents of a manuscript as the discussion of the Auchinleck and Vernon manuscripts later in this chapter demonstrate.

example). As has been seen, verbal titling practices within miscellanies often demonstrate a more pragmatic impetus, often serving (alongside non-verbal features) to divide and distinguish individual items. The fourteenth-century anthologies of Middle English literature considered later in this chapter demonstrate an intriguing mixture of the external verbal titling customs of these earlier French collections and English miscellanies.

The expansion of verbal forms of external titling cannot be detached from non-verbal practices. Manuscripts like Harley 2253 and the Auchinleck (considered in detail below), which appear approximately sixty years after Digby 86 and its thorough system of verbal differentiation and identification, demonstrate that non-verbal practices were not immediately replaced. Decorated initials, spacing, miniatures, and the like remain a major source of textual differentiation and identification throughout the later medieval period, as do the internal prologues and epilogues. As ever more complex systems of differentiating and identifying texts emerge the line between what is verbal and non-verbal, external and internal, practical and decorative continues to blur.

5.2 Case Study II: The Auchinleck Manuscript

5.2.1 External Additions

The second single-manuscript case study of this thesis concentrates on the Auchinleck manuscript (Scotland, National Library, Advocates' 19. 2. 1). Many of the titological issues raised in connection with Digby 86 and the other manuscripts discussed above reappear and show development in the consideration of the titling practices of this early fourteenth-century volume. Produced sometime between 1330 and 1340, the Auchinleck manuscript is widely regarded as exceptional for its time; according to the facsimile editors Derek Pearsall and Ian Cunningham, it is 'the first, and much the earliest, of those "libraries" of miscellaneous reading matter, indiscriminately religious and secular, but dominated by metrical

romances'.⁴² It is a substantial book, both in terms of its physical size (250 x 190 mm) and the number of its contents (which now stands, after numerous losses, at forty-four items) While romance texts dominate, constituting eighteen of its items and around three-quarters of its bulk, the Auchinleck also contains a representative selection of other writings from this period, which ranges from religious debates (*De desputisoun bitven þe bodi & þe soule*) to humorous tales (*þe wenche þat [lou]ed [a k]ing*), from poems of satire and complaint (*þe Simonie*) to those of religious instruction (*þe pater noster vndo on englissch*), from saints' lives (*Seynt Mergrete*) to a chronicle (*Liber Regum Anglie*) and a list of Norman barons' names (item twenty-one).⁴³ What sets the Auchinleck manuscript apart from all the other manuscripts considered so far in this thesis is that it is a collection of writings almost entirely in English.⁴⁴ In this respect alone, the Auchinleck has an important place within a study of the development of English titling practices.⁴⁵

The Auchinleck also stands apart from other manuscripts before and of this period in terms of its unique productive and receptive circumstances. As Timothy A. Shonk has shown, there has been a good deal of debate about how the Auchinleck, and fourteenth-century books more generally, may have been produced.⁴⁶ After describing the 'London bookshop' theory of Laura Hibbard Loomis, and outlining Pamela Robinson's arguments for fascicular production, in 'booklets', which are supported by Derek Pearsall, Shonk, building on A. I. Doyle and Malcolm Parkes's idea of a more bespoke trade in which a patron would order a book from a bookdealer who would then commission and oversee the scribe(s) who would

⁴² Pearsall and Cunningham, 'Introduction', p. vii.

⁴³ The thesis adopts the headings given in the manuscript where possible here. Where no heading is given it follows the preferred modern titles or item numbers provided by Pearsall and Cunningham, 'Introduction', pp. xix-xxiv.

⁴⁴ The contents cannot be described as entirely English as there are the Anglo-Norman macaronics of item twenty and the Latin insertions of items eight, ten and thirty-six.

⁴⁵ This discussion of the Auchinleck manuscript in this section is indebted to Ruth Kennedy who first drew my attention to the manuscript and offered much advice and encouragement on the earlier conference paper on which this section is based.

⁴⁶ Timothy A. Shonk, 'A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Bookmen and Bookmaking in the Early Fourteenth Century', *Speculum*, 60 (1985), 71-91 (pp. 72-3)

copy it, puts forward the idea that for the Auchinleck the bookdealer and the main scribe were one and the same.⁴⁷ Shonk goes on to argue in the rest of his article that this scribe (called Scribe 1 by the facsimile editors) seems to have had an editorial or supervisory role in Auchinleck's making: a role which involved the addition of a programme of external titling practices, both verbal headings and non-verbal item numbers, in the very final stages of its production.⁴⁸

Given that Scribe 1 writes roughly seventy per cent of the manuscript and is also responsible for the catchwords which provide links, as Alison Wiggins shows, between his own work and that of the other five scribes who contribute to the volume (fols 38^v, 168^v), it seems likely that he managed the Auchinleck's production and was in charge of its overall organization and assembly.⁴⁹ It is, therefore, probable that Scribe 1, perhaps in consultation with the patron, decided on and conveyed to the other contributing scribes the desired format for the manuscript. Indeed, the regularity and scale of the Auchinleck's layout is unprecedented among previous and contemporaneous English codices. The Auchinleck is largely in double columns (apart from three items) and ruling is forty-four lines to the column (except in one item).⁵⁰ Decoration also appears to have been a major part of the manuscript's original design. Provisions are made for it during the early stages of transcription: the scribes

⁴⁷ For the 'London bookshop' theory, see Laura Hibbard Loomis, 'The Auchinleck Manuscript and a Possible London Bookshop of 1330-40', *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 57 (1942), 595-627. For the 'fascicular production' theory, see Pamela R. Robinson, 'A Study of Some Aspects of the Transmission of English Verse Texts in Late Medieval Manuscripts' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Oxford University, 1972); Robinson, 'The "Booklet": A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts', *Codicologica*, 3 (1980), 46-69; Pearsall and Cunningham, 'Introduction', p. ix. For the bespoke patron-dealer theory, see A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, 'The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century', in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. B. Parkes and Andrew G. Watson (London: Scolar, 1978), pp. 163-210.

⁴⁸ Shonk first proposed the main scribe's editorial role in Shonk, 'The Scribe as Editor: The Primary Scribe of the Auchinleck Manuscript', *Manuscripta*, 27 (1983), 19-20. This argument is thoroughly and persuasively elaborated in Shonk, 'Bookmen and Bookmaking'. That Shonk's view has been widely accepted is evident in Turville-Petre's study of the Auchinleck manuscript: see Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. 108-41 (p. 113).

⁴⁹ Alison Wiggins, 'Physical Makeup', *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. David Burnley and Alison Wiggins (2003). Available at: <http://www.nls.uk/auchinleck/editorial/physical.html> [accessed 3 July 2010].

⁵⁰ Only three works (items one, twenty-one and forty-four) do not appear in double columns. For a discussion of the possible reasons for this, see Shonk, 'Bookmen and Bookmaking', pp. 77-8. In item ten, Scribe 2 rules twenty-seven lines to the column.

generally leave spaces for the decorated initials, which are also often indicated by guide letters, and the prefatory miniatures, while the place of paraphs is indicated with horizontal or vertical lines in the left-hand margin (though the work of Scribes 2 and 4 tends to be more variable). The consistency of Auchinleck's decoration – the miniatures are the work of one artist, as are the decorated initials, while the paraphs seem to have been executed by three different hands who likely worked alongside one another in an atelier – suggests that it took place once it had been assembled as a single unit.⁵¹

Despite the evidence of planning and consistency outlined above, scholars who have considered the Auchinleck's presentation have tended to stress either its low standard or its ordinariness.⁵² In the eyes of Pearsall, 'the quality of the illustration, decoration and penwork is modest and workaday'.⁵³ For Shonk, the Auchinleck 'remains a relatively plain work'.⁵⁴ However, these evaluations are based on comparisons either to English manuscripts produced at a later date (the Ellesmere Chaucer, for example) or to the existing 'sumptuous French and Latin texts being produced for the court figures'.⁵⁵ However, consideration of the Auchinleck's layout against that of earlier and contemporaneous manuscripts containing English (Harley 978, Digby 86, Harley 2253, for example) casts it in a different light. Viewed alongside these English manuscripts, the Auchinleck can be seen as another advance in terms of a specifically English *mise-en-page*: one in which a variety of non-verbal elements such as spacing, paraphs, initials and a series of prefatory miniatures work together with a double

⁵¹ For further descriptions of the practicalities behind the Auchinleck's decoration, see Shonk, 'Bookmen and Bookmaking', pp. 9-13; Wiggins, 'Physical Make-up'.

⁵² An exception here is Turville-Petre who lists the Auchinleck's 'illumination' among its 'unique' qualities: see Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, p. 113. Looking outside criticism focussed on the entire manuscript, Maidie Hilmo devotes part of her book-length consideration of vernacular English book illustration to the Auchinleck: see Hilmo, *Medieval Images, Icons, and Illustrated English Literary Texts: From the Ruthwell Cross to the Ellesmere Chaucer* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 112-25.

⁵³ Pearsall and Cunningham, 'Introduction', p. viii.

⁵⁴ Shonk, 'Bookmen and Bookmaking', p. 81.

⁵⁵ For comparisons to later English manuscripts, see Shonk, 'Bookmen and Bookmaking', p. 72. For comparisons with French and Latin manuscripts, see Shonk, 'Bookmen and Bookmaking', p. 81. Pearsall's analysis appears to be based on a combination of these criteria, see Pearsall and Cunningham, 'Introduction', p. viii.

system of external headings as well as a number of internal introductory/closing devices to distinguish and identify its texts

An often over-looked system of external verbal titling practices seems to have been part of the Auchinleck's early transcriptional stages.⁵⁶ The words 'Explicit' or 'Amen' appear in the hand of the copying scribe at the end of many items: 'Explicits' tend to be offset by one line, while 'Amens' sometimes appear beside the last line of text.⁵⁷ The function of these headings seems to be structural as they work with the non-verbal elements, particularly the enlarged initials, to mark the ends and beginnings of the Auchinleck's texts. Once the manuscript's decoration had been added – initial capitals and 'Explicits'/'Amens' rubricated, enlarged initials decorated, and miniatures/historicated initials painted – it appears that the Auchinleck was seen to offer, at least initially, sufficient visual distinction for prospective users. At some later point, likely in the very final stages of the manuscript's production, a system for additional differentiation/identification was deemed necessary. Item numbers in roman numerals and preceded by a red paraph, many of which are now lost due to subsequent trimming of the manuscript's pages, are found in the middle of the top margin of each recto. According to both Cunningham and Shonk, these are in the hand of Scribe 1, which means, as Shonk concludes, that s/he 'handled every folio of the codex'.⁵⁸

At about the same time as these non-verbal differentiating and identifying practices were inserted, an auxiliary programme of rubricated descriptive and designative headings was also added. It appears that at least three items already had headings: Scribe 3 seems to have

⁵⁶ This early date is based on the evidence that several of the 'Explicits' (fols 104^v, 167^r, 303^r) and 'Amens' (fols 72^r, 280^r) have been rubricated during the later decoration of the volume (for possible exceptions, see the n. 54 below). To my knowledge, these closing devices have received little in the way of critical attention to date.

⁵⁷ From the small amount of letters to work with, the attribution of these headings to the copying scribe seems most probable. They are in any case in the ink of the main text. The positioning of some of the 'Amens' (fols. 105^r, 201^r) seem as though they may have been added in at a later point; that they are also contracted and not rubricated as they are elsewhere seems to offer further support to this reading. This could, however, be merely a matter of style or oversight.

⁵⁸ Shonk, 'Bookmen and Bookmaking', p. 85. For Cunningham's original argument, see Pearsall and Cunningham, 'Introduction', p. xiv. For Shonk's supporting statements, see Shonk, 'Scribe as Editor', p. 20; Shonk, 'Bookmen and Bookmaking', pp. 84-5.

entered headings for the works he copied (but only those of items fourteen and fifteen remain), while item forty, copied by Scribe 1 her/himself, has a rubricated *incipit*-heading at its opening:

Here may men rede whoso can
 Hou Jnglond first bigan.
 Men mow it finde jn Englische
 As þe Brout it telleþ, ywis.⁵⁹

Furthermore, a large offset *explicit*, ‘Explicit Liber Regum Anglie’ (fol. 317^r), in the ink of the text but picked out in red by the rubricator, is offset at its end. This type of external differentiation/identification is a special case within the Auchinleck. Framing *incipits* and *explicit*s do not appear elsewhere and so, given their popularity among earlier manuscripts like Digby 86, this study concludes that it is likely that Scribe 1 copied them directly from her/his exemplar.

These exceptions aside, Shonk deduces, from what limited evidence there is, that the supplementary headings were also added by Scribe 1.⁶⁰ That the item numbers and headings must frequently work around the decoration, primarily the miniatures, suggests that they were one of the last acts in the Auchinleck’s production. On folio 31^v, for example, the rubricated heading ‘þe disputisoun bitven þe bodi & þe soule’ is written somewhat confusingly above the ‘Explicit’ to the preceding work, as presumably the miniature (now excised) occupied all the other available space. Similarly, on folio 72^r, no space has been left for the miniature accompanying and so it has been squeezed into the space between the two columns, extending into the upper margins; as a result, the item number ‘¶xxii’ is written above the second column. It seems that these non-verbal and extra verbal forms of external titling

⁵⁹ Line numbering throughout this thesis corresponds with that of the Auchinleck manuscript itself: see Scotland, National Library, Advocates’ 19. 2. 1, fol. 304^r (ll. 1-4). All further references are to the manuscript and are included within the text.

⁶⁰ Shonk, ‘Scribe as Editor’, p. 20; Shonk, ‘Bookmen and Bookmaking’, pp. 86-7.

practice were not part of the Auchinleck's original design; in the words of Cunningham, 'they seem to have been an afterthought.'⁶¹

While several critics have noted the late addition of these external features, little thought has been given to either the reasons for their original exclusion or the reasons for their eventual inclusion.⁶² The planned format for Auchinleck, its relatively consistent combination of other kinds of verbal and non-verbal visual features, can account for the initial absence of item numbers and titles; in short, they were unnecessary. What motivated their later inclusion, however, is a much trickier question to answer and involves some speculation regarding the circumstances surrounding the manuscript's production and reception.

Any consideration of the Auchinleck, titological or otherwise, is immediately complicated by its mutilated state. Multiple pages and sections of pages have been cut out of the manuscript, presumably, considering the position (at the beginnings of works) and shape (small rectangles) of these excisions, by 'miniature hunters', to borrow Wiggins's phrase.⁶³ As a result, a large number of the Auchinleck's items are imperfect at their beginnings and ends, and this in turn means that many of the rubricated headings, which often appear in close proximity to the prefatory miniatures, have been either completely or almost completely lost. Furthermore, the later trimming of the manuscript means that many of the external headings written in the upper margins have been either partially cropped, as is the case with the heading to item fourteen where only the word 'sinnes' remains, or completely lost, as might be the case for those works whose beginnings are intact but have no headings. That the openings folios of items ten, twenty, twenty-one and thirty-nine reveal that penwork

⁶¹ Pearsall and Cunningham, 'Introduction', p. xiv.

⁶² For critics, other than Cunningham, who have noted these later additions, see Shonk, 'Scribe as Editor', p. 20; Shonk, 'Bookmen and Bookmaking', pp. 15-8; Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, p. 113; Wiggins, 'Physical Makeup'.

⁶³ Wiggins, 'Physical Make-up'.

flourishes extending from the decorated initials into the top margins and the top halves of item numbers have been cut off offers further support to this view.⁶⁴

What has survived of this supplementary programme seems to suggest that it was fairly comprehensive. Evidence of Scribe 1's item numbers can be found throughout the manuscript, while her/his additional headings appear in connection with seventeen of the Auchinleck's forty-four remaining items. It is likely then that this system was added to facilitate the manuscript's use. John Mulvihill notes the practical impetus for these devices in his essay on the origins of short poem titles, during which he briefly considers the Auchinleck manuscript. Mulvihill's main contention is that 'poem titles originated as a primarily pragmatic innovation of pre-print commercial publication'; thus, in Mulvihill's opinion, the Auchinleck's added titling practices are the result of its more commercial mode of production.⁶⁵ In support of his argument, Mulvihill compares the Auchinleck to the roughly contemporaneous Harley 2253 miscellany, which lacks the Auchinleck's rigorous programme of external headings. The different treatments, he argues, stem from the different origins of the manuscripts: where Harley 2253 is usually considered a provincial production, the Auchinleck is regarded as metropolitan.⁶⁶ However, Mulvihill's explanation runs into some trouble if the pool of comparison is widened to include earlier provincial manuscripts such as Digby 86 or Jesus College, MS 29 which, like the Auchinleck, have especially thorough programmes of external headings. While it has some effect on their forms and frequency, commercialism does not fully account for the presence of titling practices within manuscript books. Instead of seeing commercialization, like printing which Mulvihill argues against, as an explanation in itself, it may be more productive to look beyond it to what social and

⁶⁴ In his list of those works with intact openings but no 'titles' in the Auchinleck, Cunningham includes item forty. This thesis, moving beyond the limits of the modern concept of the title, does not include item forty in its list because it displays *incipit* and *explicit* forms; for additional discussion of these headings, see above.

⁶⁵ John Mulvihill, 'For Public Consumption: The Origin of Titling the Short Poem', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 97 (1998), 190-205 (p. 205).

⁶⁶ Mulvihill, 'For Public Consumption', pp. 193-6.

cultural developments were motivating this particular change in the methods of production and modes of reception of later medieval texts.

Commercialized book trades, printing presses, other methods of mass production, standardized formats, and so on are all responses to the changing needs and desires of increasingly literate-oriented societies. And it seems to be with these needs and desires, with the purposes, uses and audiences (both those that are projected and those that transpire) of manuscript books, that the reasons for and forms and functions of titling practices lie. What, then, can the productive and receptive circumstances of the Auchinleck reveal about its added programme of external differentiation and identification? Advancing Shonk's idea of the Auchinleck as a commercial, 'contractual' product, Turville-Petre provides the most persuasive account of the manuscript's early history to date:

[i]ts size, the professionalism of its scribes, its illumination, would have made it a very expensive volume indeed, and it is difficult to imagine any kind of steady demand for productions of this sort. Almost certainly it was one of a kind, produced to order rather than in the uncertain hope that a passer-by might be persuaded to buy it, its contents carefully selected to satisfy the demands of some rich purchaser or patron.⁶⁷

Looking at the manuscript's contents, the Auchinleck's almost exclusive use of English and the inclusion of texts catering to both women and children within it leads Turville-Petre to the conclusion that this was a manuscript 'intended for a secular audience' and most probably 'for the household'.⁶⁸ That a number of users were envisaged for the Auchinleck from the start is borne out by the attention accorded to layout, and particularly to methods of differentiation and identification, in the early stages of its production. The insertion of a further system towards the end of its production might then suggest a need for better access: perhaps, on viewing the Auchinleck in its final form, Scribe 1 or his patron found it wanting in this respect.

⁶⁷ Shonk, 'Bookmen and Bookmaking', p. 89; Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, p. 113.

⁶⁸ Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, pp. 134, 136.

There is another possible explanation. The addition of item numbers and headings at approximately the same time would seem to indicate their interrelation within the manuscript book. This in turn seems to point towards another pragmatic feature which starts to appear more frequently in vernacular manuscripts of the later medieval period – the table of contents. Given that the first pages of the Auchinleck are no longer extant, and that examples of contents lists within romance-centred manuscripts do exist, both in earlier French manuscripts like *Bibliothèque nationale*, fr. 375 discussed above and the later English Vernon manuscript discussed below, this possibility does not appear to be completely out of the question.

Thus far this chapter, and indeed the thesis more generally, has considered the inclusion or addition of titling practices as a method for separating, distinguishing and thereby identifying the texts, which might become numerous, within a manuscript. They have been viewed primarily as a method for facilitating access to and use of a particular volume. In the Auchinleck, however, a different kind of function, stemming from its different manuscript type, is discernible. More unified than a miscellany, but more varied than a collection, the Auchinleck is perhaps best described as an anthology of literature in English. More than this, its contents are, as Turville-Petre affirms, ‘carefully selected to represent certain interests and develop certain themes’ either ‘answering the demands of a particular patron, or at the very least [...] cater[ing] for the tastes and interests of a certain kind of purchaser.’⁶⁹ In this respect, then, titling practices could serve to unify and/or highlight the connections between texts.

The Auchinleck’s inserted headings can be read in this way. Given that so much of the evidence for the manuscript’s headings has now been lost, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions as to the overall effect they may have had. What evidence there is though

⁶⁹ Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, p. 134.

suggests a degree of stylistic consistency. Of the seventeen headings that Scribe 1 adds, thirteen are nominative, usually named for the protagonist, while four are of a more descriptive and/or generic form. Such consistency can be said to fulfil a unifying function in and of itself; however, these headings may have provided unity in another respect as well. Later in his study of the Auchinleck's social context, Turville-Petre argues that '[o]nly a very rich family could have afforded to own a manuscript of [the Auchinleck's] size and quality' and that '[s]uch a family would inevitably have interests in concepts of knighthood, whether or not they were knightly themselves.'⁷⁰ This preoccupation is seen in the predominance of knightly figures – 'Reinbrun gij sone of warwike', 'Sir beues of hamtoun', 'Otuel a knigt', 'King Richard' – among the remaining supplementary headings. Extending the consideration to the Auchinleck's non-verbal titling practices, which were at one point regular features within it, a similar knightly focus, and so a unifying role, can be discerned in three of its surviving miniatures as well as in the only extant historiated initial. It is with this once comprehensive programme of non-verbal forms of titling practices that the thesis continues its titological examination of the Auchinleck.

5.2.2 Pictorial Titling

In its original form, the Auchinleck manuscript appears to have boasted an extensive series of miniatures. Critics generally agree that small illustrations accompanied a majority of the texts at one time.⁷¹ And the remaining five miniatures and the single historiated initial, viewed alongside the small rectangular excisions, now patched, near the openings of thirteen items and the loss of entire folios at the beginning of another eighteen do indeed suggest that many of the Auchinleck's works were once preceded by an image. Appearing at the heads of most of its texts, these non-verbal features work together with the other (para)textual aspects of the

⁷⁰ Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, p. 136.

⁷¹ For some examples of such statements, see Pearsall and Cunningham, 'Introduction', p. xv; Shonk, 'Bookmen and Bookmaking', p. 81; Wiggins, 'Physical Make-up'.

Auchinleck's page – the initials, spacing, paraphs, verbal headings, and items numbers, discussed above – to divide, distinguish and identify its contents. The capacity of these miniatures to not only separate and differentiate the items they precede but provide visual descriptions or representations of them as well invites their consideration as a form of titling practice: that is, as a new non-verbal form of titling practice for vernacular English manuscripts.

The scholarly view of the Auchinleck's presentation as unaccomplished, plain, unremarkable has meant that its decorative aspects have received only a modest amount of critical attention. Maidie Hilmo's recent study of vernacular English book illustration, in which she examines the Auchinleck's miniatures, offers the most thorough exposition so far.⁷² Though largely descriptive, Hilmo discusses these illustrations both in terms of their decorative appeal and their more practical purposes. But, beyond the nod of Mulvihill who notes their similarity to modern titles as they 'indicate the beginning of a new work', the role of these miniatures within the Auchinleck's wider *mise-en-page* has been little considered. It is in terms of their titling functions specifically that the miniatures are considered below.

As well as spatially marking the beginnings of texts, differentiating one text from another, the Auchinleck's miniatures also supply a visual preface to the text that follows. Appearing in advance of the work, these images visually introduce the reader or listener/spectator to key events, figures, themes, places, symbols, and so on: they serve as a pictorial representation of it. In three out of the five remaining miniatures this is achieved through the depiction of a specific scene from the narrative. Hilmo has shown, for example, the miniature that precedes item forty-three, the romance of King Richard I, pictures the episode where Richard (identifiable through the three leopards on his surcoat) severs the

⁷² Hilmo, *Medieval Images*, pp. 112-35.

chains that bar entry to the harbour of Acre with an axe.⁷³ Similarly, after careful examination of the damaged miniature which serves as a prelude to item twenty-seven, what appears to have been the fabliau now known as *De wenche þat Loved a King*, Melissa Furrow concludes that ‘[a] bed, with blue bedcovers, is still visible. The shape of the scraped out area suggests that two figures have been removed.’⁷⁴ As little of this text remains, and no other witnesses are extant, it is difficult to know for certain if this miniature depicts a specific scene from the narrative, but Furrow’s observation that ‘[o]ther illuminations from late medieval manuscripts show a similar design, with the occupants of the bed more or less chastely covered, more or less lasciviously busy’ would seem to suggest that it does.⁷⁵ Item twenty-four, the metrical romance of Reinbrun, is preceded by the largest surviving miniature which, as Hilmo explains, depicts an episode from late in the narrative where, in a case of mistaken identity, Reinbrun strikes Haslak (identifiable through his red arms and white horse) upon the helmet. All three of these images fulfil a descriptive function in relation to the text they preface.

In addition, the miniatures of items forty-three and twenty-four perform a further synoptic function. At the beginning of her considerations of both of these images, Hilmo points out that the specific scene depicted is often representative of the main action of the ensuing narrative: thus, there is a series of ship-related episodes within the romance of King Richard and a succession of sword combats in that of Reinbrun.⁷⁶ If this is applied to item twenty-seven then it would seem to confirm Furrow’s tentative classification of the work as a fabliau.⁷⁷ A summative operation is also discernible in the illumination which appears at the head of item two, although it is achieved through slightly different means. The miniature

⁷³ Hilmo, *Medieval Images*, pp. 122-3.

⁷⁴ Melissa Furrow, “‘De Wenche’, the Fabliau, and the Auchinleck Manuscript”, *Notes and Queries*, 41 (1994), 440-3 (p. 441). My own examinations of this miniature lead me to the same conclusion as Furrow. The outlines of two figures are discernible in the right-hand section of image.

⁷⁵ Furrow, “‘De Wenche’”, pp. 441-2

⁷⁶ Hilmo, *Medieval Images*, pp. 121-4.

⁷⁷ Furrow, “‘De Wenche’”, p. 441.

which introduces the romance of the King of Tars is the only surviving example of a double compartment format in the Auchinleck. On the left-hand side, a heathen kneels before an animalistic idol; in direct contrast on the right, however, two figures pray before a crucifix.⁷⁸ From these two largely symbolic scenes, the overriding conversion plot of the romance becomes clear; in this way, the miniature serves as a *précis* for the text it anticipates. In their encapsulation, compression, representation, and anticipation of the main ideas, events or actions, the Auchinleck's miniatures differentiate and identify the texts they preface and therefore constitute a non-verbal form of titling practice.

The question of whether they should be considered external or internal is a complex one. Because of their non-verbal nature, modern criticism usually considers manuscript illustrations – including historiated initials, diagrams, miniatures, column illustrations, full-page illuminations or other – to be outside, that is, an external feature of, texts. Whether this division was acknowledged or so strictly maintained in the medieval period is more uncertain. In her discussion of the illustration inserted into the margins near item fifteen, which is headed by Scribe 3 as 'Pe pater noster vndo englissch', Hilmo notes that image and text could often overlap on the manuscript page:

[t]he double outline of the frame is filled with blue like the large decorated 'P' beginning the *Pater Noster* [to which the miniature is attached], making the connection between speaking image and spoken word continuous, similar in effect to the historiated initial beginning Lazmon's *Brut*.⁷⁹

Busby observes a similar interaction between text and miniature in the manuscripts of the *Continuations* to Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval*, in which the accompanying rubric fulfils a mediatory role. Echoing the 'formulae used in prose romances to effect the well-known technique of *entrelacement*', these rubrics exhibit 'a double function: on a basic level to describe what is being depicted in the miniature and, more significantly perhaps, to integrate

⁷⁸ For a much more detailed reading of this image, see Hilmo, *Medieval Images*, pp. 113-20.

⁷⁹ Hilmo, *Medieval Images*, p. 120. For the full description, see Hilmo, *Medieval Images*, pp. 120-1.

miniature and text'.⁸⁰ Although the rubricated headings of the Auchinleck are of a less descriptive kind, their identification of key figures – 'Reinbrun gij sone of warwicke', 'Sire beues of hamtoun', 'King Richard' – within both image and text, viewed alongside their dual decorative and verbal state, confirms their mediatory function.

The addition of increasingly thorough programmes of external verbal and non-verbal titling practices is commonly seen to herald the rise of a more visual, literate-oriented kind of book. Speaking of French romance collections specifically, Busby summarizes this view:

Chrétien's poems were in all probability originally intended to be read aloud to an audience, in which situation illustrated manuscripts would have been an unnecessary and costly luxury. The production of such copies, even modest format and limited numbers, implies a shift from oral to written reception, during which illustration could help the reader visualize the text and during which both miniature and rubric could serve as a guide through a highly complex narrative.⁸¹

In the introduction to the facsimile, Pearsall emphasizes the same kinds of link for the Auchinleck manuscript: '[t]he decoration, the careful penmanship [...], the thoughtful rubrication and spacious layout [...], all demonstrate that this was a book to be looked at and read by the private reader.'⁸² The use of decorative and practical features in manuscript books does not necessarily indicate a book for private reading nor does it exclude oral/aural modes of reception. The familial setting hypothesized for the Auchinleck demonstrates this.

Within the context of a household it is certainly possible to imagine an oral/aural setting where image and text could work in conjunction with one another. The opening, both visual and textual, of *Reinbrun* is illustrative here. Prefaced by a fifteen-line miniature, the text begins:

Ihesu þat ert of miȝte most,
Fader & sone & holy gost,
Ich bidde þe a bone,
Ase þow ert lord of our gi[n]n[in]g
& madest heuene and alle þing,

⁸⁰ Keith Busby, 'Text, Miniature, and Rubric in the *Continuations* of Chrétien's *Perceval*', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. Keith Busby et al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), I. 365-76 (pp. 365-6).

⁸¹ Busby, 'Text, Miniature, and Rubric', p. 375.

⁸² Pearsall and Cunningham, 'Introduction', p. viii.

Se and sonne and mone,
 Seue hem grace wel to spede
 þat her kneþ what y shel rede.
 Ihesu, God in trone.
 Of a kniȝt was to batayle bou[n],
 Suie Gij is sone þat hiȝte Reybrou[n],
 Of him y make my mone.
 (ll. 1-12)

Such auditory openings, whether of the invocatory kind like *Reinbrun* or in the hortatory mode of *Be King of Tars* (see the discussion of the Vernon manuscript below), accompany all of the items which still have their prefatory miniatures and are evident in many of those that no longer do.⁸³ Imagining, as does Hilmo, ‘a small family circle gathered round’ the Auchinleck which likely would have been ‘[d]isplayed on some sort of support such as a lectern or table’ it seems probable that these prefatory miniatures, alongside the other decorative aspects, will have been viewed and appreciated by those who listened as well those who did the reading.⁸⁴ In such a setting, the inclusion of internal titling practices seems more than ‘merely conventional’, more than ‘harkening back to an oral tradition’.⁸⁵ In conjunction with the Auchinleck’s decorative aspects, both the verbal and the non-verbal forms of titling practice, they explicitly evoke a performative oral/aural context of textual reception, one in which readers, listeners and spectators all played a part.

As the Auchinleck demonstrates, the strict separation of word and image in current perceptions of medieval reading practices requires some modification. While it registers the growing concern for the visual seen in fourteenth-century English manuscripts, and the movement towards a more literate-oriented page, the Auchinleck still caters for oral/aural forms of reception as the variety of its titling practices, both internal and external, verbal and non-verbal, decorative and practical exemplifies.

⁸³ The opening lines that remain of item twenty-seven, ‘[i]t bifel whilom ich vnderstond/In a cuntre [...] of Ingland’, indicate a hortatory-style opening.

⁸⁴ Hilmo, *Medieval Images*, p. 113.

⁸⁵ Pearsall and Cunningham, ‘Introduction’, p. viii; Hilmo, *Medieval Images*, p. 113.

5.3 Case Study III: The Vernon Manuscript

5.3.1 Variety

The third and final case study of this chapter concentrates on the Vernon manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Eng. poet. a. 1). In its continuation of many of the practices identified above in relation to the earlier Digby 86 and Auchinleck manuscripts, this extremely large late fourteenth-century manuscript of Middle English literature is a good place to continue mapping the titling practices of premodernity. Furthermore, in its inclusion of a number of previously unseen vernacular titling practices, which point tantalizingly forward to the later developments in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which, for now, fall outside the bounds of this study, the Vernon also constitutes a good place to conclude this consideration of the title's prehistory.

Compiled during the latter decades of the fourteenth century, the Vernon manuscript is a massive volume containing well over three hundred and fifty texts.⁸⁶ Even larger than the sizeable Auchinleck, it is in Edward Bernard's memorable words a 'vast massy manuscript' (544 x 393 mm), which weighs in at approximately twenty-two kilograms.⁸⁷ While the Vernon's contents are, like the Auchinleck, predominantly English, the scope of its material is more limited, at least in thematic terms, containing as it does literature of a primarily religious and moral nature. The Vernon is copied almost entirely by a single scribe (Scribe B), most likely over a period of some years, while a second scribe (Scribe A) is responsible for the first quire as well as the contemporary foliation and many of the rubricated headings which are found throughout the manuscript. In these respects alone, the Vernon can be seen

⁸⁶ For a detailed list of these texts, see the list by Doyle which appears at the back of his *Facsimile*. Also see Mary S. Serjeantson's list compiled against the Vernon's contemporary contents list: Serjeantson, 'The Index of the Vernon Manuscript', *Modern Language Review*, 32 (1937), 222-61.

⁸⁷ Edward Bernard, *Catalogi librorum manuscriptorum Angliae et Hiberniae* (Oxford: Ex theatro Sheldoniano, 1697), I, p. 181.

as another ‘exceptional enterprise’, to use the facsimile editor A. I. Doyle’s words, in the history of vernacular English book production.⁸⁸

When compared with earlier manuscripts such as the Harley 978, Digby 86, Harley 2253 and Auchinleck manuscripts, and with analogous anthologies such as the Vernon’s younger, more economical sister-manuscript London, British Library, Additional 22283 (the Simeon manuscript), the Vernon can also be seen to contain an unparalleled range of titling practices, both of the verbal and non-verbal kinds. A hierarchical programme of non-verbal practices which ascends from one-line alternating red or blue paraphs and initials, through a gradation of enlarged and illuminated initials often accompanied by half or full-page decorative borders is in place to separate and differentiate one text or part of a text from another. As in the Auchinleck, illustrations also appear in connection with two of the Vernon’s texts. Both *La Estoire del Evangelie* and the *Miracles of Our Lady* are accompanied by a now incomplete cycle of miniatures. In addition to these sequences, the *Speculum Vitae* has a companion diagram, while the *Prick of Conscience* begins with an historiated initial.⁸⁹ Unlike the Auchinleck, the Vernon’s illustrations do not regularly preface the items to which they relate; nonetheless, they do, as Hilmo points out, ‘function in a similar way to emphasize the main idea’ of the texts they illustrate.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the interior positioning of some of the Vernon’s illuminations sees text and image working together in a different but similarly intimate way to that which is seen in the Auchinleck.

These non-verbal practices, the Vernon’s wider *mise-en-page*, create an impressive visual production. Nevertheless, consideration for the eye in this manuscript is not necessarily at the expense of the ear. For example, while the beginning of *The King of Tars* is visually marked with a rubricated *incipit*-heading and a seven-line initial with a sprouting three-part vinet border, it is also orally/aurally pointed by its opening lines:

⁸⁸ Doyle, ‘Introduction’, p. 1.

⁸⁹ For more detailed discussions of the Vernon’s illustrations, see Hilmo, *Medieval Images*, pp. 125-37.

⁹⁰ Hilmo, *Medieval Images*, p. 127.

Erkneþ now . boþe olde and 3yng
 For Marie loue þat swete þyng
 How a werre bi gan
 Bi twene . a god c[ri]stene kyng
 And an heþene heih lording
 Of Damas . þe Soudan.⁹¹

The combination of visual and auditory considerations here makes it possible to envisage a similar kind of scenario to that imagined for the Auchinleck earlier in the chapter, where texts were read aloud to a small audience of listeners/spectators, though a slight modification, perhaps to the context of a religious institution, may be necessary. In this way, the Vernon can be said, like the Harley 2253 and Auchinleck manuscripts before it, to accommodate the needs of both the solitary reader and the group of speakers, listeners and spectators. As with the Auchinleck, the inclusion of a more elaborate decorative programme within the Vernon should not be seen as a purely literate provision. While the growing functionality of such features within these fourteenth-century English manuscripts records the gradual movement towards a literate-oriented form of textuality, it should not be forgotten that oral/aural settings were still an everyday occurrence and their considerations, as internal and external titling practices show, remained a key consideration.

The movement towards a more literate manuscript page becomes apparent in the expansion of verbal forms of titling practice seen in the Vernon. Headings either rubricated, or more occasionally in the ink of the text, are found in connection with many of the texts and textual units, though their use is not as consistent as that of the Auchinleck and Digby manuscripts. The form, length and information contained in these headings varies: some are *incipits/explicits*, others are of the more descriptive and/or generic kind. Towards the end of

⁹¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Eng. Poet a.1, fol. 304^v (ll. 1-6). All further references are to the manuscript and are included within the text. Line numbering throughout this thesis corresponds with that of the Vernon manuscript itself. For the table of contents and headings, only folio numbers are given. The discussion of the Vernon manuscript throughout has been made possible through the images and transcription files made available to me by the forthcoming *Vernon Manuscript Project* which is hosted by the University of Birmingham and overseen by Wendy Scase. I am also grateful to Wendy Scase who directed my attention to the Vernon and offered her thoughts and suggestions on an earlier version of this section.

the manuscript, another type of heading, what might be called the synoptic heading, seen occasionally in earlier manuscripts and increasingly those of the fifteenth century (John Shirley's manuscripts are a good example, here) predominates. These headings may begin in the *incipit-explicit*-style but their descriptions tend to be lengthier and more summative and the heading to poem which appears on folio 287^r is exemplary here: '[h]er is a gret lame[n]tacion be twene vr ladi & sei[n]t B[er]nard/Of cristes passion hire dere sone þ[at] was so pyneful & so hard'. These synoptic headings can also be more directive or instructive in the information they provide, as the poem on folio 366^v illustrates:

Heer is a good Confession
 þat techeþ mon to sauacion
 How þat mon schal schriue[n] hi[m] here
 To techen him wel . þe maneere.

In some cases these headings gesture outside the text to the circumstances surrounding its composition or reception. On folio 353^v, for example, the poem, now known as the *Epistle of Mixed Life*, has the rubricated heading:

Here be gi[n]nþ
 a luitel Boc . þat was written to a worldli lord . to teche him
 hou he schulde haue him in his state in ordeynd loue
 to god and to his euencristene.

The descriptiveness of these headings would suggest there was a need for indicative headings in the volume, which in turns suggests a practical purpose was at some point envisaged for the Vernon. In addition to this programme of external text headings, the Vernon includes two other forms of verbal titling previously unseen in English vernacular manuscript collections: a table of contents and the provision of a designative heading for the manuscript itself. These new practices are at the centre of the following discussion.

Such a diverse range of titling practices might be expected from a manuscript renowned for its considerable physical size and extraordinary number of contents. But when viewed against the similarly sizeable Simeon manuscript, which lacks both the Vernon's

table of contents and its programme of miniatures, it seems the reason for this range might lie elsewhere. Though little of certainty is known about the Vernon's early provenance, it is generally supposed that it was made for a religious community.⁹² 'An amply-grounded assumption', in Doyle's view, 'would be that any collection of vernacular religious literature of comparable scope was most probably made for nuns or other devout women (anchoresses, vowesses or ladies of similar piety and spiritual counsel).'⁹³ This sort of setting, with its number of users and its discontinuous use for preaching or reference purposes, could account for the amount and variety of the Vernon's titling practices.

Given its size and expense, it might be worth questioning whether the Vernon was actually designed with practical purposes in mind. It is possible that the Vernon, reaching completion near the turn of the fourteenth century, was conceived as a presentational copy of some sort. The presence of material 'couched specifically for lay listeners and readers' and [t]he sheer quantity of reading matter [...] and the cyclical shape of it', which Doyle notes, offers some further support to this view.⁹⁴ There does appear to be something more ornamental, than functional, about the manuscript itself and the fact of its survival might suggest as much. Like the Auchinleck and French romance collections discussed above, the Vernon may be better viewed as a literary repository of edificatory material, as an exemplary collection of spiritual and moral Middle English writings, representing the tastes and trends of its time. Perhaps, then, the Vernon was kept on display, occupying pride of place in the library of a religious house or similar.

Until the time of future discovery, these remain matters of conjecture. However, the mixture of decorative and practical motivations that is visible in the new, specifically verbal,

⁹² It is hoped that the forthcoming essay collection *The Making of the Vernon Manuscript: The Production and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. poet. a. 1.*, ed. Wendy Scase (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011) will shed further light on the Vernon's early audiences.

⁹³ Doyle, 'Introduction', p. 14.

⁹⁴ Doyle, 'Introduction', p. 14.

forms of vernacular titling practice found at the beginning of the Vernon sheds some new, though no less conflicting, light on the early reception of the Auchinleck.

5.3.2 Expansion

As it is now organized, the Vernon begins with an early fifteenth-century index, which lists, in a variety of titular forms, nearly all of the works it contains, as well as a few that, due to the lost folios, are now absent.⁹⁵ To find such a thorough and, more crucially, near-contemporary table of contents at the beginning of a Middle English volume is rare enough. That French vernacular collections sometimes had them has already been seen, while the listing of contents seems to have been a more regular occurrence with Latin works from the twelfth century onwards, which may itself account for the list of contents which appears in the *Ormulum*'s prefatory material. It is rarer still to find that this contents list also supplies the entire manuscript with what appears to be its own name(s):

[h]ere bygynnen þe tytles off þe book
 þat is cald in latyn tonge Salus
 anime . and in englyhs tonge Sowlehele.
 (fol. i^r)

The verbal forms of titling practice with which the Vernon manuscript opens, therefore, present an especially intriguing titological study.

Whether they are the specific focus of discussion or not, the table of contents and/or its opening *incipit*-heading often feature in studies of the Vernon, usually in relation to their

⁹⁵ Serjeantson, 'The Index of the Vernon', p. 222. The dating of the table of contents is based on information given to Serjeantson by J. A. Herbert. As far as I am aware, this dating has been neither contended nor revised. A number of critics, since Serjeantson, have referred to the contents list that heads the Vernon manuscript as an index; see, for example, N. F. Blake, 'Vernon Manuscript: Contents and Organisation', in *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), pp. 45-59 (p. 47). In order to avoid confusion this thesis refers to this list as the table of contents/contents list throughout its discussion.

influence on, or rather their usefulness to, readings of the manuscript as a whole.⁹⁶ The guiding role attributed to these two external verbal forms of titling practice suggests that the critical preoccupation with them are due to their familiarity, resembling as they do the kind of front-matter – the modern contents and title page – that modern readers have become accustomed to finding and therefore privileging in their encounters with texts of all kinds. It would seem that these internalized and distinctively modern assumptions about (para)texts have influenced and so potentially skewed interpretations of the Vernon’s table of contents and inaugural *incipit*-heading thus far.

Scholarship on the Vernon accepts that the *incipit*-heading that occurs at the top of its first folio supplies the volume with an overall name or, as it is more frequently referred to, its title.⁹⁷ In fact, what this heading offers is two names for the book: one in Latin, ‘Salus anime’, and one in English, ‘Sowlehele’. The inclusion of alternative names, or more specifically, names in different languages has been seen elsewhere in the internal namings of Marie de France’s *lais* considered in the previous chapter. In the case of the Vernon’s inaugural *incipit*-heading, however, this naming takes place externally, which indicates the gradual appropriation of this authoritative/authorial (but not necessarily stable) technique by those who made (that is, transcribed and compiled) books. That ‘Salus anime’ and ‘Sowlehe’ are not titles is made apparent by the *incipit*-heading itself. Its use of the word ‘tytles’ (comparatively rare in this period) refers to the list of descriptions that make up the table of contents, whereas the manuscript itself is neither ‘entitled’ nor ‘titled’ but rather ‘is cald’ both

⁹⁶ Although few pieces are dedicated to them, the opening *incipit*-heading and table of contents usually feature in discussions of the Vernon. For example, see Doyle, ‘The Shaping of the Vernon and Simeon Manuscript’, in Pearsall, *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, pp. 1- 13 (p. 3); John R. Duncan, ‘The Textual Context of the Vernon Manuscript’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Saskatchewan, 2000), pp. 9, 19-21; Avril Henry, “‘The Pater Noster in a table ypeynted’ and Some Other Presentations of Doctrine in the Vernon Manuscript’, in *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, pp. 89-113 (p. 90).

⁹⁷ The existing scholarship on the Vernon manuscript does not offer, to my knowledge, alternative readings of this *incipit*-heading. A selection of critics who read the *incipit*-heading as a title includes Serjeantson, ‘Index of the Vernon’, p. 224; Pearsall, ‘Introduction’, in Pearsall, *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, pp. ix-xi (p. x); Doyle, ‘Shaping of the Vernon’, p. 3; Pamela R. Robinson, ‘The Vernon Manuscript as “Coucher Book”’, in Pearsall, *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, pp. 15-28 (p. 26).

‘Salus anime’ and ‘Sowlehele’; indeed, in its dual naming and discursive form of designation the *incipit*-heading appears to register the flexibility involved in nominative processes at the time. The fact that ‘tytles’ is only used in relation to the titlings found in the table of contents is also indicative as what is found in this list are primarily generic and/or synoptic descriptions of the works. In its use within the Vernon’s inaugural *incipit*-heading, then, the meaning of the word ‘tytles’ closely resembles the more expansive concept of the Latin *titulus*.⁹⁸

The differentiation between names and titles may seem beside the point here: whether they are referred to as titles or names, the fact remains that the manuscript is ‘cald’ something. This distinction becomes important, however, when the effects of critics approaching ‘Salus anime’ and ‘Sowlehele’ as if they were titles are considered. Stemming from the modern assumptions and expectation regarding titles, critics tend to see these names as revealing, and sometimes as more actively indicating, the original organizational impetus for the Vernon. The productive circumstances of the Vernon do not support such a reading. Accepting J. A. Herbert’s early fifteenth-century dating, the Vernon’s first quire and the items it contains were penned after its texts, perhaps by a number of years, but in any case, by necessity of its documentary nature, at some later point. What these external namings offer then are a retrospective pulling together of the contents, as opposed to a prescriptive plan for them. The names ‘Salus anime’ or ‘Sowlehele’, may not necessarily constitute the original motivation for the gathering together of such diverse and numerous materials, but they may be viewed more productively as an effort, similar to the added headings and numbers of the Auchinleck manuscript, to unify the miscellany in its final stages of production.

Additional support for this argument can be found in what is known and supposed about the Vernon’s construction and transmission. There is general consensus among scholars

⁹⁸ Here, the word ‘titling’ is preferred over ‘titles’ (with its modern associations) or headings (which might imply a position in or near to a text) in reference to the descriptions that occur in the Vernon’s table of contents. They are referred to as such throughout the rest of this discussion.

that, like the Digby miscellany before it, the Vernon's assembly took place over the course of several years and was affected, in large part, by the exemplars that were readily available. The idea that the original plan for the Vernon was 'to provide a comprehensive programme of religious reading and instruction, [...] to provide for the whole of the soul's health, or *Sowlehele*', as Derek Pearsall and others propose, may attribute too much of organizing role to the *incipit*-namings.⁹⁹ It is unlikely that the Vernon's producers would, indeed could, have had any definite end-product in sight when they began their ambitious project. This is not to suggest that no agenda was envisaged at all for the Vernon, but rather that whatever this might have been it was necessarily broad, elastic, continuously evolving. Thus, the later addition of the opening *incipit*-heading (and the table of contents it heads) and the naming it contains serves to order and unify the anthology. Indeed, the *incipit*-heading is transcribed by Scribe A who may have held some sort of finishing, although probably not supervisory given Scribe B's more dominant presence, role in the Vernon's final stages.¹⁰⁰ Scribe A is responsible for the table of contents and the rest of the first quire, as well as a good deal of the rubrication, particularly text headings and foliation, found elsewhere in the manuscript. It may be possible, therefore, to view these alternative names as an early interpretation – although not perhaps, as Robert J. Duncan suggests, the 'earliest' given that transcription processes themselves constitute interpretive acts – of the Vernon and the texts it comprises.¹⁰¹ It seems that this interpretation sought to impose some sort of order and unity on the anthology, perhaps so as to tie it more firmly to the place in which it was to be held, the audience it would serve, and the uses to which it might be put. That this place was a religious

⁹⁹ Pearsall, 'Introduction', p. x. For similar statements, see Duncan, 'Textual Context of the Vernon', p. 9; John J. Thompson, 'The Textual Background and Reputation of the Vernon Lyrics', in Pearsall, *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, pp. 201-24 (p. 203).

¹⁰⁰ Doyle also suggests that Scribe's A involvement with the Vernon may have occurred at a 'finishing-off stage': see Doyle, 'Introduction', p. 6. Scribe A need not necessarily have been working at some time after Scribe B. Scribe A may have been, as Doyle puts it, 'working close on B's heels', but this does not rule out the editorial role that both this section propose for Scribe A.

¹⁰¹ Duncan, 'Textual Context of the Vernon', pp. 19-20.

institution, its audience were of the religious orders, and its uses were of an instructional, meditative kind seems, therefore, to make a good deal of sense.

The contemporary need, which in the case of premodern texts typically translates into the search, for titles has meant that discussions of the Vernon's foremost titling practice almost always privilege its designative function. Yet the *incipit*-heading does serve another purpose; it also serves to introduce the table of contents: '[h]ere bygynnen þe tytles off þe book' (fol. i^r). It does not only introduce the book but the contents list as well; indeed, that it introduces the 'þe tytles off þe book' first, suggests the importance formerly attributed to the table of contents.¹⁰² By pronouncing the beginning of this table of contents, the *incipit*-heading actively calls attention to and recommends its use, and in so doing indicates the exceptionality of such apparatus in anthologies of English vernacular writings. Considering its size and number of contents, it is not so surprising that the Vernon should need such reference tools: that it should be so efficient, given the rarity of such devices in English manuscripts, is more so. With its cross-referenced medieval foliation and item numbers, the Vernon's contents list is a thorough referencing device. The ordering of the items still tallies fairly closely with the order in which the texts appear in the manuscript, which further suggests that the manuscript had either reached its final form when Scribe A came to produce the table of contents (and the rest of this first quire) or that he was responsible for this assembling himself. Furthermore, a high percentage of the contents titlings have similar (as with the works *Lamentation of Our Lady to St Bernard* and *Prick of Love*) and, at times, identical forms (as is the case for the first version of *The Pope's Trental* and *Debate between Body and Soul*) to the headings of the texts themselves, thus enabling the reader/user to better

¹⁰² The *incipit*-heading is not, incidentally, rubricated, as might be assumed from the description in Duncan, p. 19: 'The title is in a rubric at the beginning of the table of contents'. While 'rubric' can refer to a descriptive heading, the use of this word in relation to a highly rubricated manuscript like the Vernon is potentially confusing.

navigate the enormous volume.¹⁰³ Thoroughness, then, was clearly an objective in the making of this table of contents, which in turn would suggest that the utility and, more precisely, the facility of the Vernon were the motivating factors in its inclusion.

The inclusion of such a pragmatic tool of reference would have been especially valuable in a manuscript as compendious as the Vernon. Its extreme physical size will have confined the Vernon to the solid surface of a stand or desk, and the range and number of its contents will have deterred continuous, linear kinds of reading practice. It seems likely that this library-like codex will have been read in a primarily referential capacity, perhaps aloud to a congregation during or alone to oneself in preparation for a service of some sort. Pamela R. Robinson shares this view of the Vernon, hypothesizing that it may have been intended as a ‘library copy or reference collection of contemporary religious and moral works’.¹⁰⁴ It is probable, therefore, that the comprehensive list of contents that heads the Vernon was included to help the reader/orator navigate the three hundred and fifty or so leaves.

The titling of individual items within the contents table also reflects this functional drive, in that the majority consist of indicative and occasionally directive descriptions. There are two related points to be made here. Firstly, readers/users of the Vernon who chose to make use of the contents list would be provided with information about the form, subject, length, and so on of the various items: *The Prick of Conscience*, for example, ‘is departed in seuen bokes’ (fol. ii^v), while lengthier works including *La Estoire del Evangelié* and *Stimulus Amoris* are divided into smaller units of text and attributed subheadings – ‘Of þe Anunciatiou[n] ihe[s]u crist’, ‘Of his Natiuite’, ‘Of þe passiou[n]’, ‘Of þe resurrexiou[n]’, and so on – only. So, as well as guiding readers through the manuscript as a whole, the titlings within this table also leads them through groupings of related texts or textual units. The second point to be made is that a majority of the table’s titling incorporate genre

¹⁰³ For a thorough description of the discrepancies, see Serjeantson, ‘Index of the Vernon’, pp. 223–4.

¹⁰⁴ Robinson, “‘Coucher Book’”, p. 27.

indications – ‘mirour’, ‘chartre’, ‘boc’, ‘lyff’, ‘orison’, ‘psalme’, ‘disputison’, ‘meditacioun’, ‘tretys’, and so on – and/or include a descriptive summary of the subject matter: ‘[h]ou Constantyn þe Empe[r]our ordeynede for euermor in seynt petre churche at Rome in wurschip of seynt petre a lampe wyt Baume p[er]petuelly brennyngge’ (fol. i^v), but are occasionally more instructive elements: ‘[h]ou a man scholde here his masse’ (fol. ii^v). In this way, the Vernon’s table of contents can be said to operate like a bill of fare, as its titlings assist readers not only in the task of finding a particular text but also perhaps in locating a text or texts of a particular kind.

Pursuing this line of reasoning, there appears to have been some expectation that the Vernon would be read or consulted, if not on a regular basis then at least intermittently, and certainly discontinuously, perhaps in a similar way to liturgical companions, like the *Ormulum* manuscript discussed in chapter four, but more comparable to the large missals or ‘church service-books’ to which A. I. Doyle refers in his introduction to the facsimile.¹⁰⁵ When compiling his list of ‘tytles’ (fol. i^r), Scribe A appears to have had these types of reader, and their needs in respect of using the Vernon, in mind. While some of the contents list’s titlings may have originated from other sources (from the text headings of Scribe B or from the exemplars, for instance), it is conceivable that Scribe A will have had a mediatory hand in most. Indeed, the titlings of Scribe A’s contents list are often more practically descriptive than those headings found in or near to the texts themselves. Scribe A frequently adds to the information given in the text headings: to the heading ‘An Orison to the Trinity’ (fol. 114^r) he adds the information that the work is ‘in english’ (fol. i^v), while to the heading to ‘An Epistle on Mixed Life’ (fol. iiir) he adds the practical information that it ‘conteynep xxviiij chapitres þe whuche chapitres ben marked at þe bygy[n]y[n]g of þe boc’ (fol. 353^v).

¹⁰⁵ Doyle, ‘Introduction’, p. 1.

In addition, and further complicating the idea of the hierarchical relationship of text to image, Scribe A creates titlings for some of the manuscript's illustrations. For example, the miniatures that accompany *La Estoire del Evangelie* are recorded in the contents table as 'opere diuerse Stories of ihe[s]u cr[i]st and of his modur þe whyche in diuerse paneles in peyntur' (fol. i^v), while the tabular rendering of the *Speculum Vitae* is accorded the very literal description of '[p]ater noster in a table ypeynted' (fol. ii^v). With his table of contents, Scribe A seems to respond to what he sees to be lacking, in practical terms especially, within the Vernon's wider *mise-en-page*, and his insertion of rubrics at various points throughout the manuscript lends additional weight to this idea. Scribe A's possible finishing role envisaged earlier in this essay seems more pronounced here; indeed, a slight modification to his status, perhaps a promotion to final stages editor/compiler, seems appropriate.¹⁰⁶

Many of the deficiencies Scribe A responds to with the titlings in his contents list (and rubric insertions) relate to what the manuscript folio should look like and how it should be used. He appears to pre-empt what readers will look for in a manuscript like the Vernon, what they will want to see, and, most crucially, how they will read. As a consequence, the Vernon's titling practices can be seen to possess another presentational role. The discussion of the Vernon up until this point has focussed on the expanding functionality of its titling practices, but their increasing visibility and significance in the layout of this and other manuscripts like the Digby and Auchinleck manuscripts indicates that they were an intrinsic part of decorative schemes as well. The Vernon's contents list is a case in point. The pragmatic motivations for its inclusion are clear, and yet the care with which its titlings are transcribed and illuminated – with its inaugural *incipit*-heading, rubricated item numbers and alternating red and blue initials – is suggestive of another, more decorative impetus. Earlier examples of vernacular tables of contents suggest they could be deployed as a presentational

¹⁰⁶ Blake also notes the presence of a compiler/editor in the Vernon, but in relation to its contents, rather than its *mise-en-page*: see Blake, 'Contents and Organisation', pp. 48, 57.

device. In the manuscripts already considered in this study, for instance, the table of contents may be presented as part of the work as it is in the *Ormulum* or it may constitute a work in its own right as does the versified contents list of the large French romance collection in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 375 (MS II). This particular external form of titling practice could be used to elevate a manuscript's status, of making it comparable to more lavish, *de luxe* Latin and French productions. Viewed in this way, the Vernon's table of contents can be said to emphasize its importance, underscoring the magnitude of its anthologizing, and marking it as a special kind of vernacular production.

The Vernon's table of contents, its opening *incipit*-heading and the other titlings it contains represent a more concerted effort to unify its contents than has been seen in the earlier English manuscripts, both the miscellanies and anthologies, already considered in this chapter. Having said this, it must be remembered that the Vernon manuscript follows in the steps of the many English, French and Latin manuscripts that have gone before it. Its (para)textual constitution, therefore, is both a reflection and an advancement of these earlier productions. Indeed, the Vernon reaches back into the past while simultaneously gesturing towards the new, which is perhaps to be expected of a manuscript produced on the cusp of the fifteenth century. Thus contextualized, the Vernon's production does not seem quite as remarkable, exceptional, or unprecedented as other studies in this area are prone to suggest.

Viewed collectively, the collections, miscellanies and anthologies considered in this chapter reveal a gradual expansion of titling practices in vernacular writing over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. From this diachronic perspective, the increasing functionality of titling practices during this period can be seen to coincide with wider developments in the production of manuscript books – the amount and range of writings they could contain, the variety of languages and presentational modes that could be used, the numbers that could be produced and the methods available for doing so. Considered on a case

by case basis, however, these manuscripts and their individual textual and social contexts move the discussion beyond the technological advancements to the situations that inform and motivate them. As the separate case studies in this chapter amply demonstrate, an account of premodern titling practices must give space to the specificities and peculiarities of a manuscript's production, circulation and reception: it must take account of the particular circumstances that prompt its particular titling programme(s), its particular combination of internal, external, verbal, non-verbal, decorative, and practical forms.

By casting these synchronic considerations within an overall diachronic frame this chapter shows that any attempt to generalize and thus typologize the titling practices of these manuscripts, even across those of a similar period (as the disparate practices of the Auchinleck and Harley 2253 show), those which take a similar form (as the differing programmes of Digby 86 and Harley 2253 indicate), or those which embody a similar enterprise (as the differences between the Auchinleck and the Vernon show), is problematic and, more importantly, of little help. This concluding chapter demonstrates most clearly what is meant by the 'poetics' of this study's own title. The thesis attempts to locate, to use Zumthor's helpful expressions, the 'appropriate transformation rules' of titling practice across time by inquiring into its various 'modes of being and methods' in an effort to understand their 'overall signifying structure'; put another way, it deals with the specific as well as the general, the titling practices of the individual manuscript alongside the tendencies of many manuscripts.¹⁰⁷ In this way, the concluding chapter can be seen as a microcosm of the wider poetic project the thesis initiates.

¹⁰⁷ Zumthor, *Medieval Poetics*, p. xxi.

6 Afterword: Towards a Poetics of Literary Titles

The current study terminates at the turn of the fifteenth century. The decision to close at this point might seem surprising, given that the thesis suggests at times during its closing chapters, while discussing textual namings in fifteenth-century works like *The Spektakle of Luf* and *The Assembly of Ladies* in chapter four and the extensive titling programme of the fin-de-siècle Vernon manuscript [(Oxford, Bodleian Library, Eng. poet. a. 1) in chapter five, that the practice of identifying texts through naming, as well as through differentiation and description, becomes more frequent and the methods more varied in the late medieval period.

By choosing to stop its account on the cusp of the fifteenth century, however, this study eschews the usual temporal boundaries that structure and indeed limit current titological accounts. By concluding its account of the English title's prehistory before the coming of print to England in the 1470s, the thesis hopes to challenge the assumption that change and progress, titular or otherwise, occurred directly and solely as the result of print. Its chapters have argued that a vast and rich array of titling practices were in existence long before this particular technological advancement came about. In this way, the thesis hopes to avoid the technological determinism involved in dividing its material along pre-print and post-print lines, or assuming, as histories of titles have often done, that the advent of print is the primary determining influence in the development of titling practice from the early fifteenth century on. Stopping this study at the beginning of the fifteenth century also marks the period of transition between manuscript and early print during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as the next possible area for investigation and for research into the history of titles that will avoid such print determinism.

This study of the prehistory of the title has shown that titling practices did have currency in the premodern period but that their forms and functions exhibit great diversity and fluidity and so what may appear superficially to be recognisable as a title often stands a

significant distance apart from modern concepts of the title. It appears that the identification of premodern texts was achieved primarily through distinctive or descriptive means, but from the end of the twelfth-century the naming of texts, at first through internal but increasingly through external designations, became more common. That said, the use of a single, exclusive, fixed proper name for a text was extremely rare. Any titological consideration of this period, therefore, must move beyond the idea of the modern title and its attendant assumptions and expectations and consider instead contemporary assumptions, about (para)texts, authors and readers, which are essential to an understanding of what medieval authors and scribes meant when they identified their texts.

There is still much research to be done in the field of title studies. The thesis itself has been conceived as the first part of a much longer project. It appears to be the first detailed account of premodern titling practices and, in this way, it is hoped that it can contribute, as a first step, towards a more diachronically-informed theory of titling practices – or, rather, towards a poetics of titles.

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