

Preface

The starting point for this book was my Freiburg academic farewell lecture in July 2015, dedicated to the ninth-century monk and poet Notker of St Gall, traditionally dubbed “the stammerer,” and his *Liber Ymnorum*. Usually, the subject chosen for such occasions is expected to reflect a central feature of the speaker’s interests. Latin liturgical texts, mostly of poetic provenance, were – and still are – among the principal subjects of my scholarly activities. The choice of Notker and his seminal role for the history of the sequence as the subject of the lecture thus seemed perfectly natural, given the continuous and substantial focus of my work on this distinctly medieval poetic genre.

The slightly provocative title of the lecture (“The Poet as Hero?”) gestured to another field of interest over this period in the work of the Freiburg collective Helden – Heroisierungen – Heroismen. The work of the scholars and students at this collaborative research center not only stimulated my interest in narratives of posthumous idealization, but also fostered deeper awareness of the interconnections between heroic and hagiographical discourse. In this, Notker proved exemplary, revealing the subtle but profound ways by which human poetic creativity is transformed through retrospective idealization into the product of divine inspiration.

The subject continued to be on my mind when, shortly after retiring from Freiburg, I was able to spend several months at the Centre for Medieval Studies and the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto. My sojourn provided a welcome opportunity to return to the subject and to expand what were hardly more than provisional explorations. It also gave me the opportunity to reshape earlier versions of the present work in lectures. If they have now materialized as a publication under the imprint of the Institute, it is a lovely way of bringing these endeavors full circle, while offering something in return for an inspiring and rewarding experience that also opened new doors.

Back now, however, to the *Liber Ymnorum*. Treating it as an authorial work remains essential to my argument, for this groundbreaking achievement is inextricably linked with its originator Notker, remembered and venerated at St Gall since the tenth century as the one “who made the sequences,” *qui sequentias com-*

posuit, as the necrology of the monastery put it on record for generations of monks to come.

In order to emphasize the poetological novelty of Notker's invention, it is important to insist on a central point of the first part of my study, previously dealt with by Wolfram von den Steinen and more substantially by Peter Stotz. With the poems collected in the *Liber Ymnorum*, Notker – in stark contrast with the mainstream of late antique and early medieval Christian poetry – abandons the commitment to the (metrical) role models of classical Latin versification typically used by the Christian poets of the era, to produce their new songs following the established patterns of the old tongue (to echo Stotz's formulation). That Notker gave the cycle the title *Liber Ymnorum* is often considered enigmatic or even bewildering, but it turns out to be critical to the understanding of Notker's project. *Liber* (or *volumen*) *hymnorum* had, in fact, been the Latin equivalent for the Hebrew title of the Book of Psalms since Jerome and was transmitted to the Middle Ages by Isidore's *Etymologiae*, which exerted in this respect, as in many others, a pivotal influence.

The intention of this terminological choice is obvious: Notker wants his sequences to be read as an emulation of the biblical psalms. It is an ambitious claim, but it is redeemed by the measure of the work. Instead of maintaining the formal commitment to models of classical verse and strophe (with the obvious paradigm of the iambic dimeter, open to rhythmic imitation, dominating in the field of the liturgical hymn), the texts of the cycle are an unprecedented example of what we might call Latin "psalmodic poetry," featuring the fundamental structural law of Hebrew biblical poetry, as it was worked out by the eighteenth-century Oxford scholar Robert Lowth, the famous principle of *parallelismus membrorum*. Remarkably, then, Notker harkens back beyond the classical Latin and Greek tradition, drawing, in fact, on Hebrew models.

By subtly disarming criticism of non-biblical additions to liturgical chant, Notker becomes a second David, as it were, assuming the cloak of a quasi-biblical author, further evidence of the power of idealization. And yet – and this is an important caveat – to confine this impetus towards legitimization merely to the structure of the *Liber Ymnorum* would be to neglect the intrinsic quality of Notker's texts, which so remarkably combine theological depth and complexity with an arresting poetic limpidness and beauty.

No reappraisal of this extraordinary achievement can afford to disregard the institutional context of its genesis, the monastery that shaped and conditioned Notker since childhood. Thanks to its prestige and its closeness to the period's principal ecclesiastical actors, St Gall significantly contributed to the official adoption of his experiment and consequently established and promoted it as an increasingly widespread liturgical practice. The later fortune of Notker's

sequences up to the sixteenth century represents an equally enthralling, if understudied, chapter in this story and constitutes the subject of the book's second half. Two aspects should be emphasized: the background to the rapid and widespread diffusion of Notker's cycle; and the copious evidence for the role of this new repertory as a decisive cultural subtext even in extra-liturgical fields (a fact hardly taken into account to date and serving to challenge the limits of cultural difference between *Teutonici* and *Galli* in the wake of the division of the Carolingian Empire).

These reflections on the preconditions of the *Liber Ymnorum* and the multilayered sequels of its groundbreaking achievement will form the framework of this book, whose linchpin is an attempt to shed new light on Notker's poetological strategies with a focus on those parts of his cycle that offer a significant paradigmatic potential for future study.

From the perspective of its own *longue durée*, this project has proved more rewarding than I had any right to expect when I set out on it, not least on account of the many institutions and individuals to whom I am indebted. My stay in Toronto afforded me an intense period of research and of exchange with colleagues at both the Institute and the Centre. This generous invitation, for which I owe a huge debt to John Magee – then a considerate host, now a close, if geographically distant friend – turned out to be an inspiring scholarly experience, and indeed a life-changing one in many ways. Subsequent sojourns in Berkeley and Stanford, where I had occasion to develop the project and to present interim results, were equally productive, as was my affiliation with the Hamburg Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures with its emphasis on codicological materiality, especially its visual aspects.

A book dealing with a repertory fundamentally designed to be sung that seems to bracket the musicological aspects of Notker's achievement might appear a strange, even tendentious, undertaking. Yet, more than seventy years after Wolfram von den Steinen's seminal work of 1948 on "Notker the Poet," a return to the topic on the part of a Latinist specializing in medieval liturgical poetry and its manuscript traditions seems neither untimely nor unfitting. Moreover, I might be tempted to emphasize that my interest in the subject, which dates to the early 1990s, remains rooted in essential and ongoing conversations with three musicological colleagues and friends. Wulf Arlt acted in many ways as a catalyst for my explorations of liturgical poetry and played an important part in spurring my curiosity into the role of ninth-century St Gall in the invention of new chant forms to enrich the canonically established repertory. Andreas Haug was an indispensable interlocutor, not only for his penetrating reflections on Notker's quest for authorization of his innovation but also, more generally, for his ongoing recon-

siderations of the fundamental bond between singing and reading, hence of the role of the book in medieval Western religious culture. His invitation to discuss central parts of my work in his Würzburg research seminars in 2019 and 2020 yielded valuable feedback that encouraged me to continue on the path I had taken. Lori Kruckenberg's seminal study on the role of the Hirsau movement for the diffusion of the cycle, her article on Ekkehard IV's role in the glorification of St Gall's "golden age" and therefore in the hagiographical shaping of Notker's legacy, as well as her unpublished paper on the textual and scribal features of what she called the "ideal type" (in the sense Max Weber gave to the phrase) of the *Liber Ymnorum*, were all of fundamental importance to the chapters dedicated to Notker's posthumous career.

The long list of other scholars on whose research I have consistently drawn – David Hiley, Michel Huglo, Susan Rankin, Hanna Zühlke (to start with musicologists) as well as (in other fields of medieval studies) Walter Berschin, Pascal Bourgain, Harald Buchinger, Hans F. Haefele, Bruno Reudenbach, Rupert Schaab, Gundula Schiffer, Peter Stotz, Ernst Tremp, Anton von Euw, among others – could be easily extended. I am grateful to all of them. My attempt to track the agency of the *Liber Ymnorum* as an important subtext of premodern religious culture of the Latin West in the book's second part is deeply indebted to two stunning instruments and their providers: the Library of Latin Texts Online by Brepols and the digital version of the *Analecta Hymnica* made available by Erwin Rauner (Augsburg). In the steadily growing body of scholarship, Calvin Bower's comprehensive edition of the texts and melodies of Notker's corpus stands as a milestone; I hope this study will be considered a fitting complement. To the Press's anonymous readers, I owe special thanks for searching and rigorous reviews that have helped improve the manuscript in important, sometimes unexpected, ways.

I am also indebted to Jeremy Llewellyn in Vienna and Fred Unwalla in Toronto. Jeremy agreed to grapple with my English and – on the grounds of his outstanding *sprachgefühl* and his equally profound familiarity with the subject (in 2012 he had organized the Basel conference "Notker's Hand") – gave it a burnish it urgently needed. Fred in turn is a wonderful editor, matchless in his conjoining inexorable accuracy, unflinching patience and exquisite kindness, and I am deeply grateful to him for his wise and steady fostering of this project. Last but not least, the fact that a highly experienced and very careful editor such as Jean Hoff took on the task of reviewing my manuscript was a great privilege.

This book would not exist without my wife Helmtraud, who has shared her life with me for nearly forty years. Witnessing its tentative beginnings, she fostered its growth, even when my labors on it must have seemed all-consuming, with her distinctive combination of candor, empathy and robust good humor. I dedicate this book to her.

Introduction

Ninth-Century Backgrounds

Bernard of Clairvaux, in an often-quoted section of his *Apology* written in 1125 at the request of his friend William of St Thierry, severely attacked Cluniac excesses in food, clothing and buildings while ridiculing, if only en passant, his opponents' large churches and their sumptuous paintings, which catch the worshipper's eye and, as Bernard laments, dry up his devotion.¹ "Let us say," Bernard concedes, if only in a rhetorical gesture, that these things "are all to the honor of God. Nevertheless, just as the pagan poet Persius inquired of his fellow pagans, so I as a monk ask my fellow monks: 'Tell me, oh pontiffs,' he said, 'what is gold doing in the sanctuary?' I say (following his meaning rather than his metre): 'Tell me, poor men, if you really are poor, what is gold doing in the sanctuary' – *in sancto quid facit aurum?*"² Bernard's concern leads straight to the core of my own subject: the issue of enhancement of ritual sacrality by means of human art, or, to put it even more pointedly, the question of a balance between cult and culture, a conflict going back to early confrontations between religious orthodoxy and open cultural pluralism which left traces all through the Middle Ages and extends even to modern times.

Now, if it is mostly architecture and pictorial art that Bernard has in his sights here as a partisan of rigorous austerity, he could also have criticized the poetic and musical adornment of the cult, as indeed he did in other contexts, not least the genre of chant which will stand at the center of this study, the sequence. "What

1. "Omitto oratorium immensas altitudines, immoderatas longitudines, supervacuas latitudines, sumptuosas depolitiones, curiosas depictiones, quae dum in se orantium retorquent aspectum, impediunt et affectum" *Apologia ad Guillelmum abbatem* 12.28, *Sancti Bernardi opera*, ed. Jean Leclercq and Henri M. Rochais, 3 (Rome, 1963), 81–108 at 104.

2. "Sed esto, fiant haec ad honorem Dei. Illud autem interrogo monachus monachos, quod in gentilibus gentilis arguebat: DICITE, ait ille, PONTIFICES, IN SANCTO QUID FACIT AURUM? Ego autem dico: 'Dicite pauperes,' – non enim attendo versum, sed sensum – , 'dicite,' inquam, 'pauperes, si tamen pauperes, in sancto quid facit aurum?,' ibid. Translation by David Burr, online at <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/bernard1.asp>.

is *poetry* doing in the sanctuary?” would the question then read more specifically. Such a query about the legitimacy of poetic forms and poetic language within the context of devotional practice is not only an issue raised by Bernard and the Cistercians but is actually a specific feature of the earlier history of the Christian poetic tradition.³ This holds true not only for attempts at the epic transformation of the biblical message, with Juvenicus, Sedulius and Arator being the most prominent early examples, but equally with regard to the poetic additions to the mostly biblically oriented repertory of liturgical chant. Hence, late antique and medieval authors prove themselves to be quite aware of the precarious status of their situation. In fact, they regularly and critically deal with this issue in paratextual elements of their work such as prologues, dedication letters and the like, mostly so in situations of seminal innovations as in the case of Juvenicus not “shying away from submitting the majesty of the Gospel under the laws of metrics,” as Jerome has it,⁴ and, similarly, with the author who stands in the center of this study, Notker I of St Gall as the “inventor” of the liturgical sequence in its East-Frankish form.

***Puritas antiquitatis* – Ninth-Century Debates**

This case is of particular interest in that Notker’s innovation falls within a period which is deeply marked by two conflicting tendencies, both of them of long-lasting significance for the musical and poetic traditions of Western Europe. If, in the last decade of the reign of Louis the Pious (d. 840), the eagerly desired and politically underpinned “Romanization” of the liturgy and its books appears widespread and firmly established, the same period sees increasing evidence of attempts to enrich the normatively imposed repertory by means of mostly poet-

3. Peter Stotz, *Alte Sprache – Neues Lied. Kleine Schriften zur christlichen Dichtung des lateinischen Mittelalters*, ed. Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann (Florence, 2012), [3]–[43] at [11]: “Reflexion über Dichtung – vor allem ihre Rechtfertigung – ist geradezu ein Spezifikum christlicher Poesie.”

4. “Nec pertimuit euangelii maiestatem sub metri leges mittere,” Hieronymus, *Epistula* 70.5, ed. Isidor Hilberg, CSEL 54: 707. For a still very instructive close reading of Juvenicus’s poem, see Reinhart Herzog, *Die Biblepik der lateinischen Spätantike* (Munich, 1975), 1: xlv–xlix. Cf. also Dieter Kartschoke, *Bibeldichtung: Studien zur Geschichte der epischen Bibelparaphrase von Juvenicus bis Otfrid von Weissenburg* (Munich, 1975), 32–34, 56–59 and 85–87; Robert W. Carrubba, “The Preface to Juvenicus’ Biblical Epic: A Structural Study,” *The American Journal of Philology* 114 (1993): 303–312; Roger P.H. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament: Juvenicus, Sedulius, Arator* (Oxford, 2006), 126–134.

ically shaped textual and musical elements, transmitted since the ninth century, first, as occasional experiments recorded even in non-liturgical manuscripts,⁵ but increasingly also in terms of a systematic practice.

Such attempts were before long to spark a harsh backlash in traditionalist circles; suffice it to mention the often-quoted additional canon of the 845 Synod of Meaux,⁶ branding tropes and sequences as human inventions (*adinventiones*) and concoctions (*compositiones* and *fictiones*) jeopardizing the purity of pristine tradition (*puritas antiquitatis*). Clerics and monks producing or performing such adornments out of a delight for novelties (*novitatibus delectati*) were explicitly threatened with the loss of office (*quod si fecerit deponatur*).⁷ Taking up the cause of preserving the liturgy's "pristine purity," the canon addresses, alongside the *Gloria* of the Mass, which is of no immediate interest for our issue here, the melodic expansions to the Alleluia of the Mass, which, according to Amalarius of Metz in his *Liber officialis* (ca. 823), the (West-)Frankish cantors used to call *sequentiae*.⁸ By banning any kind of texting of these melismas the canon of 845 aims to protect the textless state of these melodies which were associated with the wordless *jubilus* emphasized by Augustine and others as a particularly appropri-

5. To cite one of the most famous examples, the prosula *Psalle modulamina*, a texting of an Alleluia melisma for Easter time, added at the very end of Ambrose's commentary to the Gospel of Luke in a manuscript of around 830 from Regensburg, now housed in Munich (Clm 9543). See Hartmut Möller, "Die Prosula 'Psalle modulamina' (Mü 9543) und ihre musikgeschichtliche Bedeutung," in *La tradizione dei tropi liturgici*, ed. Claudio Leonardi and Enrico Menestò (Spoleto, 1990), 279–296.

6. Wilfried Hartmann, *Die Konzilien der karolingischen Teilreiche 843–859*, MGH Concilia 3: 81–131 at 129. See Andreas Haug, "Ein neues Textdokument zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Sequenz," in *Festschrift Ulrich Siegele zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Rudolf Faber (Kassel, 1991), 9–19; Haug, "Gewinn und Verlust in der Musikgeschichte," *Schweizer Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft*, N.F. 23 (2003): 15–33; Andreas Haug, "Tropes," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Music* 1, ed. Mark Everist and Thomas Forrest Kelly (Cambridge, 2018), 263–299 at 277; Christian Thomas Leitmeir, "Sine Auctoritate Nulla Disciplina Est Perfecta: Medieval Music Theory in Search of Normative Foundations," in *Between Creativity and Norm-Making: Tensions in the Later Middle Ages and the Modern Aera*, ed. Sigrid Müller and Cornelia Schweiger (Leiden, 2013), 31–60 at 38.

7. "Propter inprobitatem quorundam omnino dampnabilem, qui novitatibus delectati puritatem antiquitatis suis adinventionibus interpolare non metuunt, statuimus, ut nullus clericorum, nullus monachorum in ymno angelico, id est Gloria in excelsis deo, et in sequentis, que in alleluia sollempniter decantari solent, quaslibet compositiones, quas prosas vocant, vel ulla fictiones addere, interponere, recitare, submurmurare aut decantare presumant. Quodsi fecerit, deponatur" (*Die Konzilien der karolingischen Teilreiche 843–859*, ed. Hartmann).

8. Amalarius Mettensis, *Liber officialis* 3, 4, ed. Johannes Michael Hanssens, *Amalarii Episcopi opera liturgica omnia* 2 (Vatican City, 1948): 304.

ate form of praise of God's ineffable dignity,⁹ hence endowed with outstanding prestige.

With regard to our subject, the terminology the synod used for the elements under scrutiny is particularly interesting. Addressing them as "novelties" (*novitates*), "compositions" (*compositiones*), "inventions" (*adinventiones*) and "fictions" (*fictions*), the canon marks them out clearly as human-made "intruders," additions¹⁰ to be eliminated from a body of texts considered as canonical, hence immutable. Now, as Meaux represents a West-Frankish situation, it might reflect an issue limited to this area. Yet the extravagant canon in question was transmitted in a tenth-century manuscript of East-Frankish origin,¹¹ hence the issue under discussion here might also have been relevant east of the Rhine. At any rate, the document is to some extent symptomatic of the impediments Notker would have to confront.

Interestingly enough, though, the aforementioned innovations were even to trigger an investigation of the Roman repertory itself, being deeply, but not *exclusively*, rooted in the Bible,¹² in order to eliminate foreign elements. In the Carolingian period, the most vocal figure of this fundamentalist current was Archbishop Agobard of Lyon.¹³ A closer look at his rigorist campaign is illuminating for an understanding of the cultural climate of the period, hence for an appropriate valorization of Notker's position.

9. James W. McKinnon, "The Patristic Jubilus and the Alleluia of the Mass," in *International Musicological Society, Study Group Cantus Planus: Papers Read at the Third Meeting, Tihany, Hungary, 19–24 September 1988* (Budapest, 1990), 61–70; Haug, "Textdokument," 13–14; McKinnon, "Re-Reading Notker's Preface," in *Quomodo cantabimus canticum? Studies in Honor of Edward H. Roesner*, ed. David B. Cannata (Middleton WI, 2008), 65–80 at 72.

10. *Adinvenire*, etc., seems to have almost consistently negative connotations in early and medieval Christian tradition: see *Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch bis zum ausgehenden 13. Jahrhundert*, ed. Otto Prinz and Johannes Stroux (Munich, 1967–), 1: 189–190; online at www.woerterbuchnetz.de/MLW/adinvenio.

11. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, 1062 Helmstedt (Hartmann, MGH *Concilia* 3: 69).

12. With a clear preponderance of Old Testament texts and a remarkable dominance of psalmic verses, especially in the field of Mass chant, which was seminally developed in Rome in the late fourth and early fifth century, a period "of unprecedented popularity for the singing of biblical psalms," James McKinnon, *The Advent Project: The Later-Seventh-Century Creation of the Roman Mass Proper* (Berkeley, etc., 2000), 36–42 ("The psalmodic movement"), the quote on p. 39.

13. The objection to non-biblical liturgical chant is much older, though. Polemics of this kind can already be observed in the milieu of oriental monasticism as early as the fifth century; cf. the dossier assembled by Harald Buchinger, "Psalm (liturgisch)," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart, 2017), 18: 459–496 at 466–467.