Reynhout, Lucien 2006: *Formules latines de colophons*. 2 vols. (Bibliologia. Elementa ad librorum studia pertinentia 25A–B). Turnhout, Brepols. pp. 334 + 428. ISBN: 978-2-503-52454-2. 150€.

The last four decades have seen the steady growth of a new discipline in Humanities: History of the book. An interdisciplinary area, it trascends the mere analysis of the volume contents and their literary or historical value and, by applying methods current in Bibliography, History and History of Art, Social and Cultural Studies, Reception Theory and even Economic Analysis or Chemistry, seeks to answer some questions that are either left unsolved or else given very general answers by traditional Philology: where, when, how, why and by whom a particular copy of a book was printed, bought and read. In opposition to more classic approaches, where the volume was regarded as hardly anything more than the physical support of a writer's brainchild, book historians consider it as an artifact that deserves to be studied individually. In other words and to put an example, any book historian will see sharp differences between London, British Library C.34.k.1 and San Marino, Huntington Library RB 69304, even though both are copies of William Shakespeare's "First-Quarto *Hamlet*" (sigla *Q1*, dated 1603), while a conventional literary scholar will probably make no such distinction between the two and oppose both *en bloc* to the other Quartos (*Q2–Q5*, dated 1604–1637) and the several Folios (*F*, dated 1623–1685).

Medievalists, for obvious reasons (after all, each manuscript is unique!), recognised the importance of answering those questions a couple of centuries ago and have been doing this kind of studies ever since, but even among us there are areas that have been traditionally neglected. It is only recently that a substantial number of people has become attracted to such "peripherals of the text" as ownership inscriptions and ex-libris, marginalia, scribblings, doodles or pen trials: in short, to the several marks and scars left on the surface of each MS with the passage of time—or its *bibliobiography*, if you will. In order to chart and conquer those *terrae incognitae* successfully,

yet, new maps must be drawn and new weapons forged, and so some scholars have embarked in the ambitious quest of devising instruments (handbooks, corpora, bibliographies, general studies, and the like) that others will hopefully use in their attempts to throw light on the darker corners of a volume. It is in this "general tools department" of Book History that Lucien Reynhout's *Formules latines de colophons* (*FLC* henceforward) must be included.

Explicit hoc totum, pro Christo da mihi potum. Hic liber est scriptus; qui scripsit sit benedictus. Detur pro pen(n)a scriptoris pulchra puella. Any scholar who has ever worked with medieval manuscripts has read one or more of these sentences, usually at the colophon.[1] These inscriptions are counted literally by the thousand, but only a few dozens were repeated over and over again throughout the scriptoria of Western Europe and acquired a formulaic patina. Most medieval colophons were written in prose, but there is a substantial number of rhyming formulas as well, either in a stanzaic format (this is particularly true with vernacular instances) or, more often, as one or more *leonine hexameters*, i.e. a hexameter with internal rhyme. These are sometimes referred to as a "(final) jingles" (Thorndike 1937, 1956, Roberts 2006: 30) and for understandable reasons they were more likely to become formulaic than prose ones, which for most cases were business-like and composed *ad hoc*. Surely because of their catchy nature (not unlike that of ditties or refrains),[2] scribes wrote such jingles in places other than the colophon (for example as pen trials, or ownership inscriptions whenever the formula allowed

[1] According to Madan 1927: 53, colophons (or subscriptions) are "concluding notes, in which the scribe's most inward mind at the moment of the completion of his long task is often revealed, whether the uppermost feeling be weariness, malignity, religious feeling, expectancy, or humour." A more objective definition is Muzerelle's (1985: §435.03): "Formule finale dans laquelle le scribe mentionne le lieu ou la date de la copie, ou l'un ou l'autre". The definition in *OED* (*s.v.* colophon, *n.*) run close to Muzerelle's: "The inscription or device, sometimes pictorial or emblematic, formerly placed at the end of a book or manuscript, and containing the title, the scribe's or printer's name, date and place of printing, etc."

[2] In French these scribal verses can also be referred to as "ritournelles" (so Muzerelle 1985: §435.11), and "envoi" is used *passim* in Gameson 2002a.

the presence of a name, as in *Qui me scribebat* [scribe's name here] *nomen habebat*) and therefore the term "colophon" can be used used inclusively—if loosely—to refer to any such inscription.[3]

While colophons are regularly quoted as supportive evidence, bibliography *on* colophons is scarce. In the English-speaking world in particular, little has been published (see the References section for details). Outside the English academia, the main work on western colophons is a massive collection of examples (*ca.* 24,000 items) done by the Benedictine monks at Le Bouveret in Switzerland (Bénédictins du Bouveret 1965–1982), although there are some smaller pieces of merit.[4] *FLC* is thus a most welcome guest to a half-empty hotel.

Lucien Reynhout is currently Librarian at the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels. He is a disciple of Albert Derolez, who supervised his Ph.D. thesis, entitled *Etude sur le formulaire latin des colophons de manuscrits occidentaux (IIIe–XVIe siècle*) and read at the Université Libre de Bruxelles in 2001. *FLC* is a revised version of this dissertation. Reynhout's work, which is divided into two volumes (*Texte* and *Annexes*), represents one of the most interesting outcomes of Quantitative Codicology, a comparately young discipline (it was born in the very late 1960s with the advent of personal computers to University campuses; Ornato 1991: 376), and I do not think that is is an exaggeration to say that it will soon become a landmark of the field.

[3] Even though the sentence was actually written by sixteenth-century hand on a flyleaf, the great bibliographer Falconer Madan, for example, was happy to exemplify colophons with the following inscription: "Ihesus marcy Lady helpe / For cutt my dogge ys a parillus welp" (1927: 54; the sentence comes from Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawlinson C.572, f. 1r, but the version given here is closer than Madan's to the MS actual spelling). He is not alone in doing so. Inscriptions on flyleaves, marginalia, onwnership inscriptions and the like are also recorded as "colophons" in the Benedictine corpus: see for example **272**, **306**, **1575** (figures in bold refer henceforward to the colophon numbers in le Bouveret-*FLC*).

[4] Huglo 1961 and Garitte 1962, in particular, were early and able stabs at the matter and obviously served as direct inspiration to Reynhout.

The basic tenet of the volumes, stated several times in the "Introduction" (I.17–54), is the assumption that writing routines such as *Finito libro…* or *Feliciter* were not simple clichés where the scribes vented their inner feelings, as early scholars wanted us to believe: rather, they were chosen by the copyists according to their own private chronological, geographical and social coordinates. In other words, there was a constrained selection in their usage. Taking the Benedictine catalogue as the base for his corpus, but with the addition of more than a thousand new instances taken from other sources (the several volumes of the *Catalogue des manuscrits datés*, together with Lowe 1934–1971 and Pellegrin & Gilles-Raynal 1975–1982), the Belgian scholar set out to prove the existence of "systems of formulas" in western colophons, and to study how these systems developed in time, space and social strata.

Attempting a full analysis of all the formulas recorded by the Bouveret benedictines is obviously out of the question: the sheer number of examples would make that a feat near impossible to achieve, at least by a single person. Therefore, Reynhout chose 29 formulas that are frequently encountered in western colophons from the third to the sixteenth century. These formulas, for the most part offering a number of syntactic or semantic variants, constitute about a quarter of the total number of items recorded in the Swiss census (*ca.* 6,500 MSS).

The formulas are grouped into six chapters according roughly to the period when they were either created or most frequently used: "I. De Rome à Ravenne" (Late Antiquity; I.57–81), "II. Le temps de monastères" (7th–11th centuries; I.85–100), "III. Le temps des écoles" (from the 12th century onwards; I.103–140), "IV. A l'aube de la Renaissance" (13th–14th centuries; I.143–236), "V. Le siècle des humanistes" (15th century; I.239–302) and "VI. Le crépuscule des manuscrits" (16th century; I.305–310). All save the last one (devoted to the ending *-ebat*) study at least two inscriptions. Chapter IV is noticeable for its extension: thirteen separate formulas are studied there, further subdivided according to the European domain where they were born or became more popular: German (three formulas),

Italian (two formulas), Anglo-French (three formulas), Scandinavian and Netherlandish (two formulas), or Slavic (three formulas).

The treatment is virtually the same for each of the formulas under scrutiny. The several variants of the sentence are compiled and given alphanumeric codes (these appear in bold) according to internal relations between them: **A1**, **B2a**, etc., and then the percentages for each variant are tabulated according to several parameters, usually by date of composition and by domain, but also by region, volume contents, literary genre, language, or according to the scribes' birthplace. In cases of extremely popular inscriptions, such as *Detur pro pen(n)a scriptori pulchra puella*, pious, satyrical and neuter variants are treated separately. After each table, some discussion follows on how the formula expanded in time and space.

The conclusions (I.313–332) present a general overview of the historical and geographical development of formulas in colophons as deduced from the data collected in the preceding chapters, trace the possible sources of inspiration that moved the creators of formulas, and suggest future development for this type of study. Concerning the evolution of formulas during the Middle Ages, the possible triple connection between formula, script and cultural movement is stressed there several times, and the central position of Italy, France and the German Reich versus the peripheral character of the British Isles or the Iberian Peninsula is also a point to be noted. As to the possible sources of colophons, religion—doxology in particular—is paramount in the creation of such inscriptions, but there are examples drawn from literature and Roman epigraphy.

The second volume (*Annexes*) presents the description of the MSS treated in the first volume, together with a number of additional tables and dot maps that expand or further illustrate the extension of the formulas treated on the different chapters, and the relevant bibliography. For the reader's benefit, such mass of information is digested in two ways: as a concordance of the several variants of each formula and as a bibliographic record of the primary sources. The concordances are presented both alphabetically (II.9–25) and grouped by formula (II.26–42), while the bibliographic descriptions (which fill most of the volume: II.70–317) provide the basic information of

date and place of composition of the MSS, contents, name of scribe and provenance, ditto for the limner and commissioner, formula and variant. For convenience, MSS are arranged and quoted not according to their current library shelfmark but using the number assigned in the Bouveret collection (instances drawn by Reynhout from the other sources are numbered and asterisked: *__1__–*__1130__). For instance, the several inscriptions found in the "Findern MS" (i.e., Cambridge, C.U.L., Ff.i.6) are referenced as __12570__.

FLC is an impressive work by any standard and deserves praise. It is obvious that Reynhout knows his field of study intimately, and this is shown, for example, by his detailed analysis of the state of the art (I.25–32)—although Plummer 1926 is curiously missing.[5] Using a combination of Philology and Statistics as the basis for his analyses, the Belgian scholar succeeds in presenting us the evolution of the several formulas in a simple and intelligent way. He is able to demonstrate, for example, how the scribal inscription *Quod…* followed by the scribe's name (cf. "Quod William Le Neue" in London, British Library, Harley 6251, f. 105v), must have been born in an English University, perhaps Oxford, sometime during the late 1200s, became very popular in the 1400s and was still up and about during the 16th century (it can be found in pamphlets and broadsheets printed during the reigns of Mary Tudor (see Rollins 1920: 12) and Elizabeth I (Hall 1864: 25, 19, 38, etc.).[6]

[5] Works by Richard Gameson are also missing (2002a–c), but it may be that the bibliography of the original 2001 Ph.D. dissertation was not fully updated for *FLC*. A fourth contribution by Gameson appeared in 2006.

[6] I am unsure about the equation *Quod…* and ME *quoth* (< OE *cwæð*) suggested on I.196. While it is true that etymological ⟨þ⟩ is spelt ⟨d⟩ in some MSS (for example, London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A.2), this is as a whole not only a late development (Jordan 1974: §207, Rem. 1 and 3, where *quod* for **quoth* is expressly dated "15th cent."), but is usual only in Northern dialects as well, as seen by the supportive OED quotations on I.196, fn. 1 (as an aside, note that Reynhout, who is—understandably enough—unfamiliar with ME orthography, misreads ⟨þou⟩, ⟨kni3te⟩ in OED as *⟨pou⟩, *⟨knyzte⟩). A spelling ⟨quod⟩ instead of **quoth* would be, therefore, unexpected in early and/or non-Northern MSS—and both Oxford and Cambridge are located in the southern half of Britain.

FLC is a prime example of consistent scholarship as a whole, but I think that Chapter IV in particular stands out. It is not only the longest section in the book, but probably the most attractive too, since it is there that the full potential of Reynhout's method is best showcased. Let us take his treatment of the formula *Qui scripsit scribat semper cum Domino vivat* (I.171–185) as an illustration of the possibilities of such analysis. The several variants (both monostich and distich ones) are briefly described and coded, then tabulated according to their distribution in time, space and MS content. Using tables that picture the geographical expansion of the formula through countries and centuries, the author demonstrates that the leonine must have been created in Italy in the late twelfth century, expanded around Southern France in the 1300s and the Iberian Peninsula by the 1400s, and reached its outermost limits in Northern Europe during the 15th century.

Reynhout is moreover able to imagine how the formula could have fared around the Mediterranean: it may have been carried from Italy to South France by the scribes who settled in the new Papal court at Avignon (1309–1377), and hence to Aragon and Castille to the west. He even manages to show how different variants of the same formula were adopted or preferred areally: **A1a1** (the monostich version) crossed the Alps into France but made little headway into Spain, while **A2a2** (a distich, with the second verse displaying the name of the scribe and an internal rhyme *vocatur* (or *nuncupatur*) : *benedicatur*) must have travelled to Spain directly from Italy, while other variants (**A2a1a–c**) remained purely Italian.

An attentive reading of Chapter IV demonstrates that the main political zones in Europe (the German Empire, France, England, the Iberian Peninsula and Italy) were—timidly—developing their own systems of distinctive scribal inscriptions by the 1300s. Although the early stages can already be seen in formulas studied in Chapter III, it is impossible not to connect the rise of these "national colophons" with the decadence and fall of the unitary concept of the *Latinitas* on the one hand, and the rise of vernacularisation processes, particularly in Northern Europe, on the other.

The methodology devised by Reynhout in *FLC* makes it relatively simple to build well-founded hypotheses on the temporal, spatial or social origins of MSS displaying one of these formulas whenever more positive evidence is lacking. Thus, a Latin volume that contains the jingle *Qui scripsit scribat, semper cum Domino vivat* and dated palaeographically in, say, the last quarter of the twelfth century is likely to have been composed somewhere in Italy, while another instance of the same sentence but where the distich ending in *...vocatur a deo benedicatur* follows immediately may well be due to a Spanish pen. Similarly, a colophon showing the *Quod…* sentence is almost sure to have been written by a British scribe.

Put it shortly, *FLC* opens the door to the diachronic, diatopic and/or diastatic study of colophons. To a linguist this is perhaps a bit of a foregone conclusion (for, what is a new formula but an innovative utterance that ultimately is either accepted and propagated, or else rejected by the community of speakers?), but it is nice to see a palaeographer demonstrating how these sentences behaved and expanded following the wave model. (This was done unbeknownst to the author, for the linguistic side of the matter is kept very much out of the volumes: I have found only some remarks about linguistic variation made *en passant* on I.47.)

On the other hand, some of the methodological decisions taken in *FLC* may want revision. The actual building of the corpus, for example, is not explained in sufficient depth. Although he devoted two pages to the matter (I.33–34), it would have been good to learn how the six original Bouveret volumes (*ca.* 3,000 pages altogether) were turned into a searchable database. A footnote (I.34, fn. 91) seems yet to suggest that the items were hand-picked, by reading and re-reading the whole *répertoire*, then keyed in computer files.[7]

Classification of the formulas was done on a lexical basis, and this is another issue of the work. For instance, no less than six semantically similar subvariants of the distich version of *Qui scripsit*

[7] It is a pity that Reynhout's project "Colophones librorum manu scriptorum occidentalium," announced some years ago as an online database in palaeographia.org, seems discontinued.

vivat… are given the same tag **A2a2**. This is confusing: it would have been surely much better to provide separate codes for each one (say, ***A2a2a–f**). While this may seem a petty censure (a quick look at the Bouveret repository would tell us the exact wording of each variant), a classification that would take Syntax into the equation would allow to see how these minor versions of a formula actually fared in Europe, which can be much more revealing than a study of the major (and, usually, less distinctive) renderings. For example, I have suggested elsewhere that the Bridgettine monks at Vadstena Abbey preferred the formula *Heu male finivi quia scribere non bene scivi* over the semantically equal but more frequent *Heu male finivi quia non bene scribere scivi*. I fear that Reynhout would have treated both renderings under the same code.[8]

The third aspect of the work that elicits criticism is the presentation of the data, which is too pithy sometimes: more verbose explanations of the different tables would have been a plausible idea. Data handling and retrieval can be also unclear at times. For instance, it is impossible to know which of the two main versions of the extremely popular *Finito libro…* jingle (either *… reddatur cena magistro* or *…reddatur gloria Christo*) is more frequent in the corpus, because *FLC* only provides percentages and, in this particular case, each version is analysed separately (one of them, tagged **C1a**, is satirical, while the other, **B1**, is pious; see above about this). Quoting exact figures for each formula somewhere—the systematic index of the concordances (II.26–42) may have been the right place—would have been appreciated. It is true that one can count them, for the "Index des numéros d'attestation par formule" (II.54–69) matches Bouveret number and variants of each formula, but for the most popular scribal inscriptions, such as *Et sic est finis* or *Feliciter*, there are several hundred items and the task of counting them becomes extremely tiresome.

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[8] Moreno Olalla 2013: 159.

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