

A Very Portable Boethius:
De consolazione philosophiæ, MS 84
at the Beinecke Library of Rare Books and Manuscripts
at Yale University

Margit J. Smith

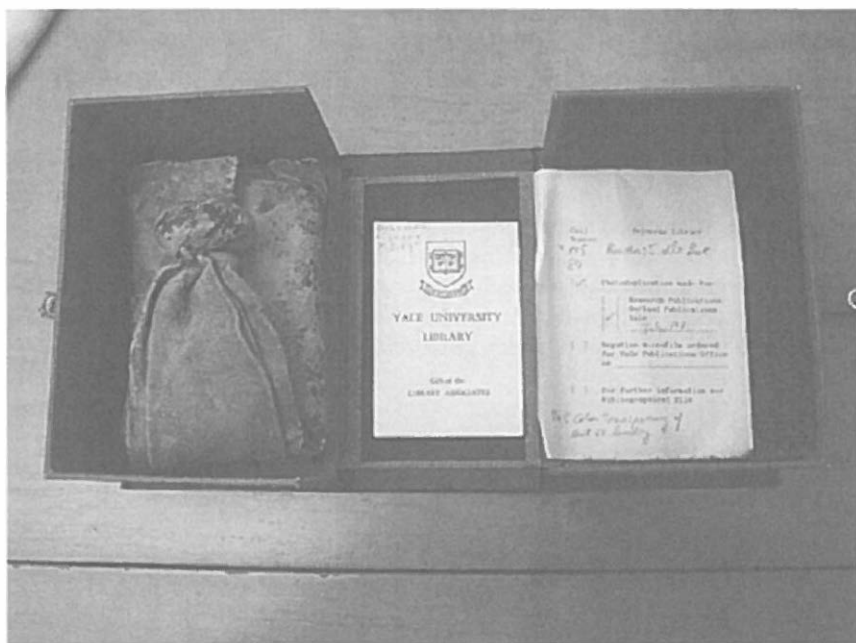


Fig. 1: *De consolazione philosophiæ* by Boethius (MS 84), at the Beinecke Library of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (photo: Beinecke Library)

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GIRDLE BOOKS

Before describing this particular book some remarks about girdle books in general are in order. In 2003, Jim Bloxam (Senior Conservator at Cambridge University Library in England, who, unfortunately, had to end his association

with the project several years ago) and I began to survey and analyze the documented three girdle books in the US, and the twenty-one in northern Europe.¹ It was our goal to write a monograph about them, as to date no such comprehensive work exists with photographs and codicological descriptions of all. I am not a medievalist, a Boethius scholar, nor a student of philosophy. I am a librarian and bookbinder with a special interest in medieval books, and particularly in one little-known format – the girdle book, and I am now carrying on this project by myself.²

Since early medieval garments did not have pockets, the ample hoods and sleeves often served to carry small items. However, purses, charms and amulets,

¹ Their locations, call numbers and content categories are:
in the US:

- 1 New York Public Library (Spencer Coll. MS 39, religion);
- 1 New Haven at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University (MS 84, philosophy);
- 1 Chicago at the Newberry Library (MS f.38, religion);

in Europe:

- 3 Munich at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (Inc.c.a.220o, religion; CLM 19309, religion; CGM 8950, law);
- 2 Copenhagen at the Royal Library (Gl.kgl.Saml. Nr. 3423 8o. Religion; Rostgaard Saml. 6 8o, Law);
- 1 London at the British Library (Add.Ms.15700, religion);
- 1 Stockholm at the Royal Library (C 109, law);
- 1 Gothenburg at the Rhössa Museum of Design and Applied Art (RKM 519-15, philosophy);
- 1 Tallinn at the City Archives (C.m.9 groß-8o, law);
- 1 Torun at the Nicolaus Kopernikus University Library (Ob6 14498-4500, religion);
- 1 The Hague at the Museum Meermanno/House of the Book (1 F 50, religion);
- 1 Dessau at the Stadtbibliothek-Anhaltische Landesbibliothek (Georg 276, religion);
- 1 Berlin at the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Ms.Lat.oct.217, religion);
- 1 Halle an der Saale at the Universitätsbibliothek Halle (ThSGV 3148, religion);
- 1 Erlangen at the Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen (B 17, religion);
- 1 Nuremberg at the Germanische Nationalmuseum (HS 17231, religion);
- 1 Düsseldorf at the Stiftung Museum Kunstpalast (Inv.-Nr. 8309, religion);
- 1 Schweinfurt at the Otto Schäfer Bibliothek (OS 1233, religion);
- 1 Isny at the Evangelische Kirchenarchiv (land register, law, taxes, gifts);
- 1 Kremsmünster at the Benediktinerstift (CC 391, religion).

The 16th-century volume from the Quamforsiana Library, last owned by Marianne Bastad Wistrand, was sold at an auction in 1998 in Germany and is now in private hands at an undisclosed location. It is the only book I was not able to examine.

² For my descriptions of other girdle books see: Das Meißner Rechtsbuch der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek in München: Ein Teil des Projekts zum mittelalterlichen Beutelbuch, *Einbandforschung* 20 (2007): 12-24; "City Rights of King Magnus Eriksson in Tallinn," in *Texter och tecken från svensk medeltid*, ed. Per-Axel Wiktorsson (Uppsala: Svenska fonskrift-sällskapet, 2012), 27-42; "Anna, Dorothea, Katharina und Margarethe: Das Beutelbuch im Besitz von vier Frauen des Mittelalters," I and II, *Einbandforschung* 23 (2008): 16-25, and 24 (2009): 12-24.

folded almanachs used by physicians and astrologers, keys, lockets, pomanders and reliquaries, small tools and other implements were frequently attached to belts, called the *châtelaine*. Newly wedded women wore keys to cellars and storerooms on their belts as a sign of being ready to take on the responsibilities of a household. The French word for girdle book, *livre à l'aumônière* derives directly from the almoner's, or beggar's purse attached to the belt, as seen in many contemporary paintings.

Protective enclosures and containers for books have been in use since long before the Middle Ages. Examples are the clay pots housing the Dead Sea Scrolls, also the leather cylinders, the *capsæ*, used to store scrolls and clay tablets as in the library at Alexandria, the satchels still being made for Ethiopian prayer books, and the *cumbdachs*, or book chests, used by Irish monks to carry their precious manuscripts and prayer books from place to place, possibly even to Iceland, which they reached as early as 700 CE.

It is estimated that for every five medieval books still in existence in their original binding, ninety-five have been lost, were destroyed, or worn out and discarded after their function was fulfilled.³ This leaves a very small number of original book structures that can be used for research into their history. Most early book formats provide a sense of intrigue as to their origin and provenance, and information about their production, distribution and use are being collected and documented in increasing numbers of studies. Among others a project is currently underway in Germany to document all medieval bookbindings, through the "Arbeitskreis für die Erfassung, Erschliessung und Erhaltung historischer Bucheinbände."

The main purpose of the girdle book was the physical and spiritual protection of the written word. To this was added a practical form of mobility, resulting in the specialized form of the binding's extension from the bottom edge of the book. Among the already small number of medieval books available to us, the girdle book stands out because so few of its kind survive and are known today, though they are often represented in the arts of the mid-fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries. Their production, however, does not seem to have extended beyond the sixteenth century. So far we know of twenty-four manuscripts and books in their original girdle bindings, though I have been asked to examine more than half a dozen others referred to in library records as girdle books. Due to extensive restoration, or repairs they were changed considerably so that it cannot be said with any certainty that they were initially girdle books. Over the span of several years, I was able to examine and photograph all documented girdle books, except the one sold in 1998 in a Sotheby's auction to a private German collector.⁴

Why are girdle books so little known even amongst people who work with rare books and are entrusted with their care? Several answers can be suggested:

³ Janos A. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), ix.

⁴ See note 1.

Little known in part because of their already mentioned scarcity, partly because relatively little research has been carried out into their construction and what has been written is not always easily accessible. Their history and especially their representation in the arts, however, were given more attention and began to be examined early in the twentieth century. Another reason has been put forth, namely, that once books began to be shelved with their spines facing out (around the sixteenth century), rather than being stacked on their boards, the leather extensions became difficult to deal with and were frequently cut off. If large enough they could be used to cover other, smaller books. Frequently they were also disbound and the pages found new use as guards, reinforcements, paste-downs and spine linings in other books. Not to be forgotten are the wars, feuds, fires and other disasters that took a toll on large numbers of books, as well as the Reformation and Secularization of monasteries and convents.

The earliest recorded date, 1479, is in the *Breviarium secundum chorum Bambergensem. Pars aestivalis*, a manuscript on paper, which is very well preserved in its original binding in Berlin. Earlier representations of a type of binding akin to girdle books, appear in the visual arts before the mid-fifteenth century, such as on the tombstone of the French woman Jeanne Brichard, a member of the Beguines in Paris, with a date of 1312.⁵ She carries a book over her arm with a long loop that reaches almost to her knee – certainly a forerunner of the girdle book developed about 100 years later (fig. 2).

The use of girdle books by clerics and nuns who needed easy access to the required daily prayers and services during their work and travel, as well as its use by pilgrims and devout men and women for private devotions is readily apparent. In this context it is represented in contemporary arts in paintings, sculpture, drawings and prints in the hands of apostles, saints, the Virgin Mary, the devil, angels, priests, popes and merchants. It becomes the symbol of knowledge, intellectual curiosity, learning, but served among lay people also to announce the material well-being of its owner, his use of specially produced goods and sumptuously made items. And although 'girdle book' evokes the image of the book attached to the girdle, artists frequently depicted it being carried by hand as in this sculpture (fig. 3).

We also see the girdle book in the service of judges and law clerks who traveled the circuit to dispense the law as evident in the examples in Munich (*Das Meissner Rechtsbuch*, Bayr. Staatsbibliothek Cgm 8950), the Law Book of King Erik Magnusson (Tallinn, C.m.9, gross-80), *Breves expositiones circa leges Iutiae* (Stockholm Royal Library, C 109), and *Jyske Lov* (Copenhagen Royal Library, Rostgaard, Saml. 6, 80). The example in Munich is very large and its extension is slit in the center to fasten the book to a saddle or carry it over the shoulder. Although not meant to be attached to the belt because of its

⁵ Renate Neumuellers-Klausner, "Auf den Spuren der Beutelbücher," *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 55 (1980): 298.

size and weight, it is nevertheless bound in the style of the girdle book, and provided protection from rain, snow, dust, insects and other damages.



Fig. 2: Tombstone of Jeanne Brichard, Church of St. Jacob, Paris, 1312
(out of: Renate Neumüllers-Klauser, "Auf den Spuren der Beutelbücher,"
Gutenberg-Jahrbuch 55 [1980]: 298)



Fig. 3: Isenheimer Altar c. 1510-1515. Carving of St. Jerome with girdle book
by Niklas Hagenauer. Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar, France
(<http://www.travelphotobase.com/s/FCOLM.HTM>)

The appearance of a philosophical text in this format, however, adds another dimension as it points to a widening intellectual awakening in the population. In this case it proves the importance Boethius had reached and sustained over the centuries, extending to, and even beyond, the late Middle Ages.⁶ In contrast to the *libri catenati*, books chained to desks and lecterns in libraries which could only be used in situ, this girdle book format provided its owner, possibly a wandering scholar or teacher, with a portability usually reserved for the nobility and clergy whose reading materials were securely transported in custom-made boxes and specially constructed traveling libraries. The girdle book format not only gave the owner the physical freedom to use the book wherever he chose to carry it, it was also a symbol of the growing freedom and desire to extend one's study and inquiry in new directions – it became the property of the ever increasing reading public. Thanks to the availability of translations of frequently used works, a knowledge of Latin was no longer required. At this point the owner of the philosophical text did not necessarily HAVE to have it with him at every turn, he WANTED to have his copy available at all times.

BOETHIUS, THE PERSON

Shortly before he died a martyr's death in 524 Anicius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boethius wrote *De consolazione philosophiæ* encouraging his readers to find spiritual help in contemplation leading to the knowledge that true happiness is not to be found in riches and material possessions, but only in God's grace and mercy. In *De consolazione* "... Philosophy [in the form of a Lady] is represented as appearing in a vision to the author who is dejected by the collapse of his temporal prosperity. Step by step she leads him up the mount of a dialectical purgatory, as it were, to the edge of paradise, convincing him of the justice of God's ways to men and reassuring him of the efficacy of prayer."⁷

Boethius, born in 480 in Rome into a Christian family, was orphaned at the age of seven years when his father, who had risen to Consul, died shortly after being appointed. His young son was raised in the aristocratic family of Quintus Aurelius Memmius Symmachus, to whom he refers affectionately in *De consolazione*, and whose daughter Rusticiana he eventually married.

His education and knowledge of the Greek language and the works of the Greek philosophers led him to write, as well as translate texts from the Greek. He translated "... Ptolemy for astronomy, Nicomachus for arithmetic, Euclid for geometry. But the chief work of these prosperous days ... was his commentaries

⁶ Howard Rollin Patch, *The Tradition of Boethius: A Study of His Importance in Medieval Culture* (New York: University of Oxford Press, 1935), claims that *De consolazione philosophiæ* was the most widely read book after the Bible for about a thousand years.

⁷ Edmund T. Silk, "The Yale 'Girdle Book' of Boethius," *The Yale University Library Gazette* 17 (July 1942): 4.

on the logical treatises of Aristotle ...”⁸ This ambitious project, to translate into Latin, and comment on all of Plato’s and Aristotle’s works, thus creating a synthesis of their philosophies, however, remained unfinished – cut short by his execution. His translations and comments had, and continue to have significant influence on the study of philosophy as among his wide ranging and extraordinary achievements he is credited with developing the Latin terminology used to study medieval philosophy.⁹

As a scholar of arithmetic, geometry and mathematics, as well as music, he was one of the first, if not the first, to suggest that the pitch of a note is related to the frequency of sound. His writings, including treatises on logic, which became known as *Logica vetus* remained standard sources for materials in the *quadrivium*, the course of medieval study in monasteries and the fledgling universities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and throughout the Renaissance¹⁰ (fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Boethius teaching his students. Historiated initial in a manuscript of *De consolatio philosophiae*, Italy, 1385 (MS Hunter 374 (V.1.11), folio 4r; http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/File:Boethius_initial_consolation_philosophy.jpg)

⁸ Thomas Hodgkin, *Italy and her invaders, 476-535*, vol. III, book IV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), 528.

⁹ <http://www.rafiniert.ch/sboethius.html>.

¹⁰ J. J. O'Connor and E. F. Robertson, "Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius," <http://www-groups.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/~history/Biographies/Boethius.html>; Eric W. Weisstein, "Quadrivium," in *MathWorld-A Wolfram Web Resource* (<http://mathworld.wolfram.com/Quadrivium.html>).

In about 520, King Theodoric¹¹ who ruled Italy as a representative of the Byzantine emperor appointed Boethius to serve as head of all government and court services as *Magister Officiorum*, in which position he tried to mend relations between the Church in Rome and the Church in Constantinople. It is speculated that Boethius's fall from favor stemmed from his attempt to reconcile the two, as he was eventually accused of treason against the state and imprisoned. During the trying days of his imprisonment and in a state of despair when he knew that he would be executed shortly, he took refuge in his faith and wrote *De consolazione philosophiæ*. He examined questions of chance, tried to reconcile divine foreknowledge with human freedom, and probed the effects of good and evil.

He has been called Rome's last great intellectual and a model of the philosopher-statesman embodying the Platonic ideal.¹² His remains are buried in the town of Pavia in the Church of Pietro in Ciel d'Oro (fig. 5).



Fig. 5: Tomb of Boethius in Pietro in Ciel d'Oro church in Pavia, Italy
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tomba_di_Severino_Boezio.jpg)

¹¹ Theodoric the Great (454 – August 30, 526), known to the Romans as Flavius Theodoricus, was king of the Ostrogoths (471-526), ruler of Italy (493-526), and regent of the Visigoths (511-526). He bore the title of Consul of the Roman Empire from 484 and played a significant role in helping to preserve and pass on the legacy of the Classic Age (http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Theodoric_the_Great).

¹² Sec: O'Connor and Robertson, in <http://www-groups.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/~history/Biographies/Boethius.html>.

Recent Boethius studies, however, contradict 524 as his death date and present another course of his life. On a website for the “Gesellschaft für Gregorianik-Forschung,”¹³ an organization devoted to the study of Gregorian Chant and its historical development, his life is described as progressing differently. His death date is given as probably shortly after 546. During the intervening years he is supposed to have devoted himself to intense music studies in Rome. In order to completely immerse himself in this effort he is said to have changed his identity, and have taken up residence within a commune in Campagna together with his wife, two sons and his father-in-law. In this deception he was aided by King Theodoric and Pope Hormisdas.¹⁴ As it was in their own interest to see him continue his experimentation in music theory, they circulated the rumor of his imprisonment and execution, thereby letting him work undisturbed and without outside demands on his time.

It is said that he often travelled to Byzantium for research, and that the reconstruction of Hagia Sofia with the help of the Emperor Justinian¹⁵ was partly carried out to provide an acoustically suitable space for his music. Further travels took him to Alexandria, Greece, and through Persia to India providing inspiration and material for further experimentation.

Finally it was Pope Vigilius¹⁶ who became suspicious of Boethius and his group of followers, and decided to put an end to their activities. Probably in the fall of 546 Boethius, together with his family and friends, was captured and imprisoned. During his imprisonment Boethius was forced to ‘admit’, by writing *De consolazione philosophiæ*, that Theodoric had falsely spread the rumor of his execution. Boethius, however, is said to have written it in such a way that it could be read and interpreted to reveal the true information about his incarceration and execution, and to give details about the chants that would save them for future generations.

Notwithstanding his usefulness to the pope, in 546 Boethius and most of his closest friends were martyred as heretics. Several of them escaped and continued to practice the new way of chanting in secret. Decades after Boethius’s death Pope Gregor, himself a student of music, recognized the power of the chants, adapted those that suited his own concepts and incorporated

¹³ <http://www.gregorianik-forschung.de/boethius.htm>. The writer has not found any corroboration of the claims put forth by this website, or the “Gesellschaft.” It is presented here for the sake of inclusiveness in the recounting of Boethius’s life.

¹⁴ Saint Hormisdas, pope from 514 to 523. He reunited the Eastern and Western churches, which had been separated since the Acacian Schism of 48. Date of birth unknown, elected to the Holy See, 514; d. at Rome, 6 August, 523. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/271802/Saint-Hormisdas>. See also Catholic Encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07470a.htm>.

¹⁵ Justinian (527-65; <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15427b.htm>).

¹⁶ Pope Vigilius reigned 537-55, date of birth unknown; died at Syracuse, 7 June 555; *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15427b.htm>

them into his musical interpretation of the Bible which became the basis of his legendary antiphonary.¹⁷

BY WAY OF PROVENANCE

Very little is known about the manuscript's history before it was presented to the Beinecke Library by the Yale Library Associates in 1941. It had been in the collection of A. Edward Newton (1863-1940), author and publisher, who was called "America's best-known book collector" by Geoffrey D. Smith. Smith further states that Newton's sizeable and eclectic collection to be auctioned comprised some 10,000 books and manuscripts to be sold in three parts. Newton did not require the library to stay together, rather "...he wanted to give other booklovers and collectors the same opportunity he himself had so enjoyed." He referred to the joy of searching, hunting for, and finding just the right volume to add to one's collection, instead of buying en bloc.¹⁸ The auction house of Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York conducted the sale in three sessions in April, May and October; the girdle book was sold on May 14, 1941 to the American book dealer Charles A. Stonehill.¹⁹

In his essay "The Yale 'Girdle Book' of Boethius" Edmond T. Silk observes that "There is abundant evidence that [this] girdle-book passed through the hands of several contemporary readers. These were not students of the elementary grade but mature and thoughtful persons anxious to read Boethius aright and understand him to the full. Their pains have removed some obvious errors, filled in one or two notable gaps in the text, jotted variant readings from other manuscripts, and here and there contributed substantial marginal notes drawn from what was still in the fifteenth century the recognized authority on *De consolatione*, namely the commentary of Nicolas Trivet."²⁰

In the fifteenth century books were still treasured items and owners often indicated their ownership with inscriptions, coats of arms and other marks. This volume, however, does not reveal who owned it before Newton, nor where it was written and bound. According to the writing style it is reasonable to assume

¹⁷ Gregory I, known as Gregory the Great, c. 540 – 604, became pope in 590, and is buried in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome (*The Houghton Mifflin Dictionary of Biography* (2003) http://books.google.com/books?id=2jMS6_jICOQC). His antiphonary, one of the liturgical books intended for use in the choir, greatly influenced the Roman liturgy. It is probably the first collection of chants, a compilation of pre-existing material into a coherent and well-ordered whole; see *Catholic Encyclopedia*: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01576b.htm>.

¹⁸ His article "Great auctions of the past: The A. Edward Newton Auction, part two" in which Smith quotes E. Swift Newton, A. Edward's son, in *The Yale University Library Gazette* 17 (1942); also online: <http://archive.today/ZfSVz>.

¹⁹ C. A. Stonehill – book dealer and author of books on antiques. Together with A. Block and H. W. Stonehill author a useful reference work for determining authorship of anonymous works: *Anonyma and Pseudonyma*, 4 vols. (London: C. A. Stonehill, 1926-27).

²⁰ Silk, "The Yale 'Girdle Book'," 3-4.

that the scribe was English, but even the cataloging record is cautious and puts a question mark after the country.

Several inscriptions in a mixture of English and Latin, mostly the latter, on the lined parchment fly-leaf in back are recipes against digestive problems – the most thorough a *Medicyn for the Colyk*. These notes support its English origin, but was the owner a physician? A parent attempting to treat an ill child? A bachelor given over to the easy life? Whoever penned these words at the end of *De consolatione* attested to the fact that a cure for the distress of the soul, and a cure for the ailing body should coexist to produce the whole person – *mens sana in corpore sano* (fig. 6).

In two visits to the Beinecke Library I gathered details beyond what has been documented before, nevertheless, much of the following description is based on the cataloging record and supporting documents kindly provided by the Library.

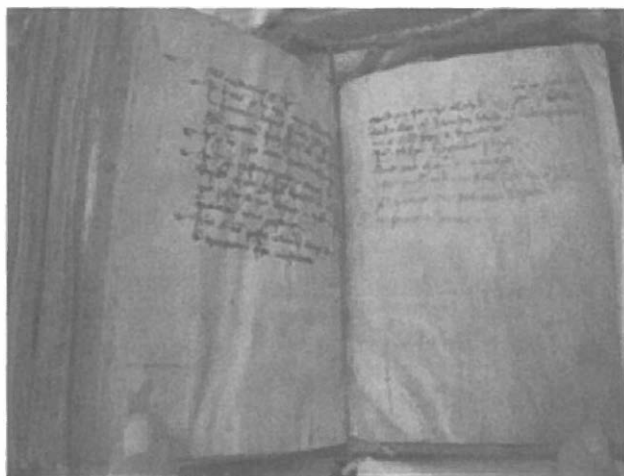


Fig. 6: Last textpage with *medicyn for the Colyk* (photo: Smith)

THE PORTABLE BOETHIUS

Today large numbers of copies, editions, versions in print and electronic format, and translations into many languages, exist of the *De consolatione philosophiæ*. Alfred the Great (c. 848-899) and later Chaucer (c. 1343/44-1400) as well as Queen Elizabeth I in the sixteenth century translated the work into English; the French poet Jean de Meun (c. 1250-1305) and before him an eleventh-century German monk, Notker Labeo of Sankt Gallen also rendered *De consolatione* into their own languages.²¹ The work has been glos-

²¹ From: "Books and writers, Boethius (c. 480– c. 524)," which also lists a selection of printed editions beginning with Koberger's first book in 1473 in Nuremberg; it also included the

sed, explained, interpreted and examined from every angle – its text, the illustrations, the printings, the bindings, the notes, the marginalia.

Not much attention, however, other than in the immediate environment of the Beinecke Library of Rare Books and Manuscripts, has been paid to the binding of one particular volume, namely MS 84. As the majority of girdle books is religious in nature, this volume stands out as only the second one to contain a philosophical text; the other being the *Soliloquium* of Isidorus Hispalensis in Gothenburg, Sweden, at the Röhsska Museum (RKM 519-15) that is bound with a set of “Rules for Life” in Latin, probably written in the thirteenth century.

Opening this fifteenth-century manuscript the reader comes face to face with what is purported to be a portrait of the author himself in the charming but somewhat crude, historiated initial ‘C’ of the beginning line: *Carmina qui quondam studio florente peregi*. His face is turned slightly to the left, with tufts of hair framing his forehead, and a growth of beard on his left cheek. His stern look must reflect the difficulties of his incarceration. The initial and the portrait are executed in red ink, and further embellished with flourishes spilling over into the upper margin that has been cropped (fig. 7).



Fig. 7: Portrait of Boethius at the opening line of *De consolazione philosophiæ* (photo: Smith)

Including the lower and upper extensions this unassuming volume with a primary and secondary covering, measures 285mm x 87mm x 43mm at the spine, and weighs 250g. With boards of 110mm x 75mm x 4.2mm it is a very comfortable size and fits easily into one's hands. It is devoid of any exterior embellishments.

commentaries by Aquinas' (<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/boethius.htm>). See also George H. Putnam, *Books and Their Makers during the Middle Ages*, vol. 1 (New York and London 1898), 100. He states that King Alfred chose for his translations books likely to fill up the greatest gaps in the minds of his countrymen, “some books most needful for all men to know” that included *De consolazione philosophiæ* as a guide for both laymen and ecclesiastics.

The parchment folios are quite uneven in size, varying from 100-105mm x 74-78mm x .12-.32mm in thickness. The writing space of 64-68mm x 41-48mm, is indicated with a frame all around, and the lines, mostly 12 to a page, are ruled in reddish brown ink using prick-marks and slashes in the outer, and sometimes upper and lower margins. The manuscript leaves were trimmed unevenly, with a loss of some marginalia (fig. 8).

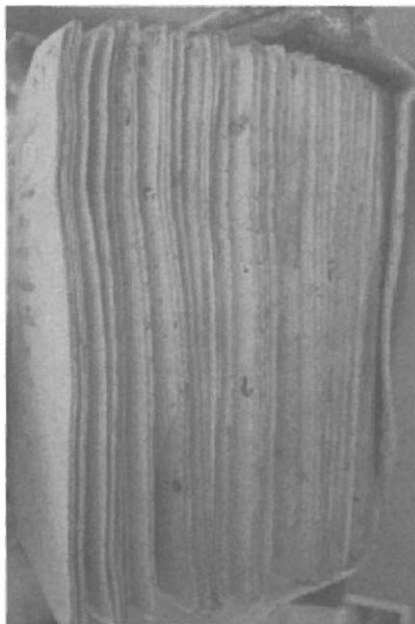


Fig. 8: Prick-marks and slashes in outer margin.
Note also the very irregular trimming of folios (photo: Smith)

Three scribes worked on this manuscript in various styles of informal gothic, semi-cursive scripts, sometimes changing every few lines:

- Hand 1: ff. 1r-33v, with a red running title *Liber primo* or *li pmo*, and red underlined catchwords preceded by 'paragraph' marks. This section is also rubricated throughout;
- hand 2: ff. 34r-60v, and 112v-169r, has catchwords in the gutter, often surrounded by rectangles, and shows red section initials throughout;
- hand 3: ff. 60v-112v, shows many erasures; also corrections by Hand 2, but no catchwords. (They may have been trimmed off.) Various hands added interlinear glosses and notes, and also contributed the notes on ff. 170v-171r (fig. 9).

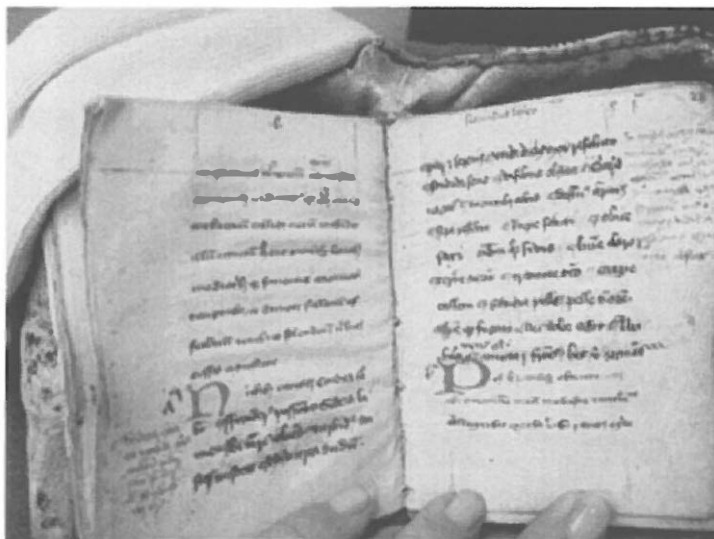


Fig. 9: Inconsistent headings, and marginalia (photo: Smith)

The scribes took great liberty in how they indicated the division of the text into five books through various headings and margin notes:

- *Liber p[ri]mo* on facing ff. from 1r to 27r, either *lib* or *l* on verso and *pno* or *l* on facing recto;
- *Secundus liber* on 28r; 28v to 69v *l*, but 2 from 29r to 60r;
- [*Liber*] 3 begins on 60v, indicated in top margin as *2 li 3* and 3 on 61r;
- *lib 4* is indicated in margin of 105v and on 112r a special mark; this pattern continues to 167v and 168r;
- book five begins with a rubricated initial *D* and the numbering begins on 143r, with *li* on facing verso.

Including the fly-leaves there are 171 text leaves in 19 signatures not at all uniform in size. The endpapers, or rather three fly-leaves, front and back, are of vellum now without paste-downs, and expose the oak boards with little sign of former adhesives; hewing marks are clearly visible, however. The parchment is between .12mm and .35mm thick, very similar to the text folios (see fig. 6).

The volume is sewn on three alum tawed slit thongs, 5.4mm wide, in the all-along style in which each half of the thong is surrounded with thread, and provides an extremely strong connection of the sections. Suiting the needle and thread to the thickness of the parchment, the binder used a 1mm thick linen thread. Instead of making simple head and tail bands of the wrapped style, they are intrically constructed of braided strips of leather over a core of strong cord (fig. 10).

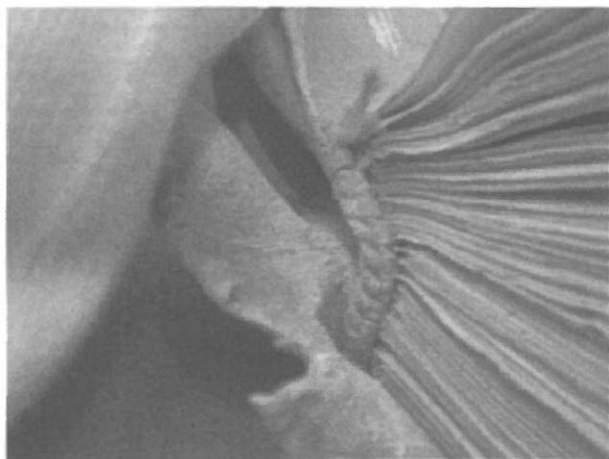


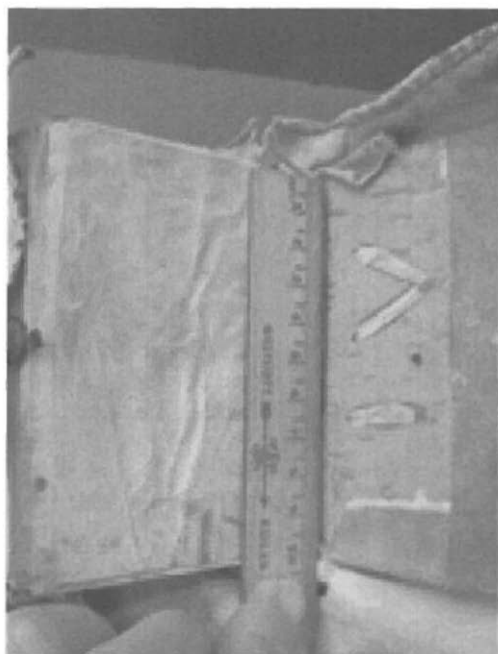
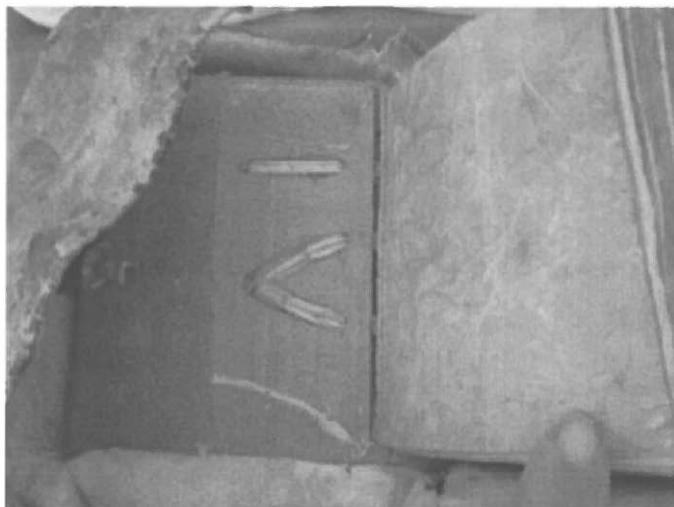
Fig. 10: Headband constructed of braided leather thongs (photo: Smith)

As expected on bindings of this period, the spine is nearly flat, almost without a shoulder, but has become slightly concave as often now happens with frequently used books (fig. 11).



Fig. 11: Note the almost flat, slightly concave, spine (photo: Smith)

The supports are laced into the boards in an unusual pattern: Thong one is laced in a straight path, thongs two and three converge in the center. This pattern is reversed on the lower board. All thongs are pegged with small wooden pegs pounded into the wood to hold them fast (figs. 12 and 13).



Figs. 12 and 13: Inside upper and lower board without paste-downs, and reversed pattern of lacing the three cords. Also note the neatly skived edge of lower turn-ins (photo: Smith)

Whether the 4.2mm thick boards are beech or oak has not been determined with absolute certainty. The cataloging record mentions beech and so

does Greenfield in her description.²² Edmund Silk identifies the boards as oak, and an informal documentation note in the library's files states the same²³ with which the writer agrees.

The manuscript is bound in a double-cover girdle book style, meaning it was first completely covered with a traditional style binding, and the secondary cover was added as extra protection and to make it portable without having to hold it by hand. Whether both were done at the same time is unknown. The material of the secondary cover, however, is compatible with the primary cover.

Dating of medieval books and manuscripts is extremely difficult as in most cases no dates are given for production, and certainly not for the binding. What can be determined more closely is the date of the writing style on which one may base a binding date. By comparing other binding elements of the times such as styles of sewing, corner construction, headband construction, skiving or its absence, the quality of skin and paper or parchment, the kind and amount of lining of the pages, illustrations and illuminations, handwriting, etc., an approximate date may be established. In this case all elements point to a fifteenth-century binding.

Both covers are constructed of deer skin, also often called chamois which was treated during tanning with fats and oils to make it almost impervious to moisture. Both covers are very thin; that the primary cover is only a little more than 1/2mm thick means that it was skived all over very skillfully. The secondary cover is about 1mm thick and extends across the fore edge to cover nearly half of the board, and the extra flap of leather on the top edge measures about 23mm. The secondary cover is attached by means of two pockets of a reddish color, sewn into it with what was originally pink thread. The cover is hemmed all around with the same pink thread to strengthen the edges.

When closed, the entire book is covered by the extension from the lower edge and the flaps on top and fore edges, providing complete protection from the elements and outside influences. This protection was important for people on journeys and in everyday life which was lived, to a larger extent than today, out of doors.

The extension from the lower edge of the book ends in a quite beautifully executed Turk's head knot, 20mm high and 41mm wide, constructed of strips of chamois about 5mm wide; it is attached to the extension with another strip of skin (fig. 14).

²² Jane Greenfield. "Notable bindings XXV," *Yale University Library Gazette* 77 (2002): 91.

²³ Silk, "The Yale 'Girdle Book'," [1].

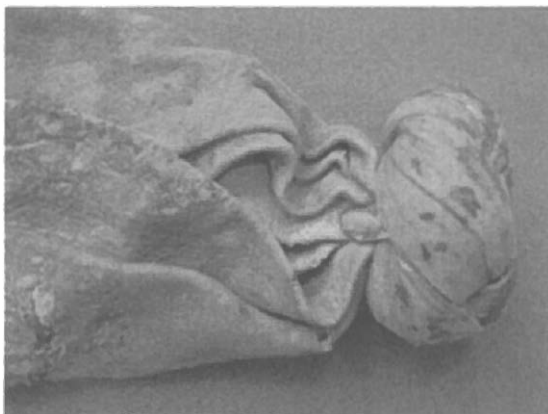


Fig. 14: Turk's Head Knot attached with thong to extension (photo: Smith)

This knot allowed the book to be suspended from the belt or to be carried by hand – in this fashion it hung with its head downward, but when swung up to be read, the text was in the correct direction. Since the extension is slightly longer than the book is high, it can be opened without straining the hinges or spine (fig. 15).



Fig. 15: The generous extension allows the book to be opened without strain (photo: Smith)



Figs. 16 and 17: Similar brass fittings on the *De consolatione* at Beinecke Library and the *Soliloquium* at Gothenburg Röhsska Museet (RKM 519-15) (photos: Smith)

As parchment is an extremely hygroscopic material and the books were usually subjected to great fluctuations of humidity, most early books needed to be kept closed with a strap or other device to prevent severe warping of the boards and parchment. This volume is outfitted with a strap nailed to the upper board under the secondary covering, it extends over the fore edge – one can feel the nail head through the leather – and closes on a pin in the lower board. It ends in a nicely designed brass fitting of a zoomorphic shape. This brass fitting resembles the one on the volume in the Gothenburg Røhsska Museet, and like it is attached to the upper board, closing on a pin on the lower board. (figs. 16 and 17)

Several further similarities may be pointed out between these two volumes. In both instances the edges of the covers are neatly hemmed all around as reinforcement. Both are covered with chamois, which may originally have been dyed pink. Attached to the upper cover, the brass fixtures are at the end of a leather strap, they reach to the lower cover where the small opening on the underside of the domed head fits onto a small pin. The sewing supports are also laced into the boards in a similar fashion. Upon further examination of the two manuscripts, more common features may be found that help establish a closer date, and reveal a binding location for one or both.

Throughout the years this small volume has experienced much wear, has sustained damage, some of it now mended, but overall the bookblock and binding are in excellent condition. Holes and tears that have not been closed only add to the overall feeling of age and use the volume has seen. Enclosed in a custom-made box, it is available whenever a scholar or researcher into medieval books needs to consult it.

MEDIUM AEVUM
QUOTIDIANUM

67

KREMS 2014

HERAUSGEGEBEN
VON GERHARD JARITZ

GEDRUCKT MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG DER KULTURABTEILUNG
DES AMTES DER NIEDERÖSTERREICHISCHEN LANDESREGIERUNG

niederösterreich kultur

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Vorwort

Der vorliegende Band von *Medium Aevum Quotidianum* beinhaltet zwei Schwerpunkte. Zum einen vermittelt er wichtige Forschungsergebnisse zu Alltag und materieller Kultur des Mittelalters aus dem nordamerikanischen Raum. Margit J. Smith lässt uns an ihren Untersuchungen teilhaben, welche sie seit Jahren zu einer der bedeutendsten internationalen Spezialistinnen zum mittelalterlichen Beutelbuch haben werden lassen. Melitta Weiss Adamson, eine der anerkanntesten Vertreterinnen der Forschung zum mittelalterlichen Nahrungswesen, analysiert komparativ eine bayerische deutschsprachige Handschrift des 15. Jahrhunderts zu Weinbau und Weinkultur. Dieselbe stellt eine Übersetzung von Burgundio von Pisa, *De vindemiis*, aus dem 12. Jahrhundert dar, welches letzteres Werk auf Teilen der *Geoponika*, einem byzantinischen landwirtschaftlichen Handbuch des 10. Jahrhunderts, beruht.

Der zweite Schwerpunkt des Bandes vermittelt die überarbeiteten deutschsprachigen Versionen dreier Vorträge von Vertreterinnen der Universität Graz, welche dieselben beim internationalen Medieval Congress 2013 an der Universität Leeds zum Hauptthema des Kongresses, "Pleasure", präsentierten. Alle drei Beiträge beschäftigen sich mit der Auseinandersetzung von kirchlichen bzw. städtischen Autoritäten des süddeutschen Raumes mit Vergnügen und Festlichkeit und damit auftretenden gesellschaftlichen Problemen.

Gerhard Jaritz