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VARIETAS: A WORD OF MANY COLOURS

Like most medieval esthetic terms, 'variety' is most often defined positively as a balance between two extremes: proper 'variety' is the mean between 'bland' and 'chaotic'. But an obvious difficulty at once arises. One group's 'pleasing variety' is another's chaotic grotesquerie or boring monotony. Cicero was accused in his lifetime of indulging in 'Asiatic' lushness instead of adhering to the limpid 'Attic' style of his predecessors, though within two generations he was held up as the model orator by Quintilian, and evermore afterward. What constitutes variety changes, perhaps not so much in the rational definition of the concept, but in how it is experienced, how it makes sense esthetically. Making sense of something is not the same thing as defining it only in words, for English 'sense' (like Old French *sens*) is used for the whole human complex of thought, feeling, and perception, that kind of knowledge which is based in sensory experience.

Yet how can historians possibly now adequately comprehend how things 'felt' to people so long ago? Surely this is the point at which the words that our texts record will obviously fail to convey the lived experiences. Nonetheless, in this essay I will attempt to sketch the changing profile of the *experience* of 'variety', not solely its definitions. I will use a philological method to do so, examining its use through the verbal company it keeps in a group of texts from Roman antiquity through the twelfth century. The very wide range of words with which it was associated over such a long period responds to a significant characteristic, not only of *varietas* but of most medieval esthetic terms. For they rarely mean only one thing, and thus they resist definition. It is best to think of *varietas* first of all not as a concept so much as a word covering many degrees of experience along a continuum between opposites, 'too much' and 'too little'. The very imprecision of the measure is essential to its nature, for variety can never be only one thing.

In his rich ekphrasis (an example that is 'Asiatic' without any doubt) upon the Justinian basilica of Hagia Sophia (mid-sixth century), the Byzantine historian Procopius described the coloured marbles and ever-opening interior vaults of the building:

> All these details, fitted together with incredible skill in mid-air and floating off from each other [...] produce a single and most extraordinary harmony in the work, and yet do not permit the spectator to linger much over the study of any one of them, but each detail attracts the eye and draws it on irresistibly to itself. So the vision constantly shifts suddenly, for the beholder is utterly unable to select which particular detail he should admire more than all the others.[1]

As described, the harmony of the interior is understood to be produced in the way each detail in turn takes the beholder's eye around and through the building. Procopius says that the details led his eyes to constantly shift their gaze as new vistas opened up to him, as he moved about within the building. Such esthetic movement was called *ductus* in some ancient rhetoric texts, a useful term which models artistic experience as a journey undertaken by means of the varying and various pathways in a work, marked out by its stylistic elements.[2]

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[1] "ταῦτα δὲ πάντα ἐς ἄλληλα παρὰ δόξαν ἐν μεταρσίῳ ἐναρμοσθέντα, ἔκ τε ἀλλήλων ἠωρημένα [...] μίαν μὲν ἁρμονίαν ἐκπρεπεστάτην τοῦ ἔργου ποιοῦνται, οὐ παρέχονται δὲ τοῖς θεωμέοις αὐτῶν τινι ἐμφιλοχωρεῖν ἐπὶ πολὺ τὴν ὄψίν, ἀλλὰ μεθέλκει τὸν ὀφθαληὸν ἕκαστον, καὶ μεταβιβάζει ῥᾷστα ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτό. ἀγχίστροφός τε ἡ τῆς θέας μεταβολὴ ἐς ἀεὶ γίνεται, ὑπολέξασθαι τοῦ ἐσορῶητος οὐδαμῆ ἔχοντος ὅ τι ἂν ποτε ἀγασθείη μᾶλλον τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων." Procopius, *De aedeficiis*, ed. and transl. by Henry B. Dewing, 7 vols., vol. 7, Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard Univ. Press, 1940, 1.1, 47-48 (pp. 22f.). See the basic study of Byzantine esthetic by Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium*, London: Kegan Paul, 1948, esp. pp. 34-35; more recently see: Jas Elsner, "The Rhetoric of Buildings in the *De aedificiis* of Procopius", in: Elizabeth James (ed.), *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, Cambridge (Mass.): Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007, pp. 33-57. Procopius was described as *rhetor*, though some controversy exists over what education he might have had: see Averil M. Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, London: Duckworth, 1985, pp. 6-8 and pp. 19-32.

[2] The concept was defined usefully by the late fourth-century grammarian, Consultus Fortunatianus, whose discussion was incorporated by Martianus Capella; see: Consvlti Fortvnatiani, *Ars rhetorica*, ed. and transl. to ital. by Lucia C. Montefusco, Bologna: Pàtron, 1979. But in ancient rhetoric, the model of composition as a journey is also much older, and my use of it in this essay as an aspect of style owes as much to Quintilian as to Fortunatianus. I have traced the adaptation and expansion of *ductus* as a formal principle by later medieval writers in two essays: Mary J. Carruthers, "Rhetorical *ductus*, or, Moving through a Composition", in: Mark Franko/Annette Richards (eds.), *Acting on the Past. Historical Performance across the Disciplines*, Hanover: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 2000, pp. 99-117; and Mary J. Carruthers, "Late antique Rhetoric, early Monasticism, and the Revival of School Rhetoric", in: Carol D. Lanham (ed.), *Latin Grammar and Rhetoric. From Classical Theory to Medieval Practice*, London: Continuum, 2002, pp. 239-257; and also in: Mary J. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought. Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*, Cambridge (Mass.): Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998, esp. pp. 72-82.

Besides the soaring vaults, the domes, and arches, the coloured marble panels and columns draw Procopius's admiring eyes:

> One might imagine that he had come upon a meadow with its flowers in full bloom. For he would surely marvel at the purple of some, the green tint of others, and at those on which the crimson glows and those from which the white flashes, and again at those which Nature, like some painter, varies with the most contrasting colours [ταῖς ἐναντιωτάταις ποικίλλει χροιαῖς].[3]

As this excerpt makes clear, variety is essential to *ductus*; indeed the variety of a work constitutes its *ductus*. The itineraries within any crafted work are marked out by the modes and colours of its style. Style tells us how we should 'go' – the English expression used by musical performers, knowing 'how the work goes' is apt here.[4] Style develops out of and distinguishes a composition's disposition, its arrangement, and is thus an aspect of what we now would call a work's internal 'logic' or 'argument' – but it encompasses a broader experience than what the word 'argument' now conveys.

A good place to start to understand esthetic *varietas* is with its appearance as a canon of stylistic analysis in ancient rhetoric, as we find it defined in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. There we read that "Dignitas est quae reddit ornatam orationem varietate distinguens"[5] (*Dignitas* is what makes an oration ornate marking it out with variety.); later the *auctor* defines 'ornateness' as possessing the qualities of *gravitas, dignitas*, and *suavitas*. *Dignitas* elsewhere as well is particularly associated by the *auctor ad Herennium* with *varietas*. *Dignitas* and *dignus*, its adjective, are related to

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[3] "λειμῶνί τις ἂν ἐντετυχηκέναι δόξειεν ὡραίῳ τὸ ὕνθος. θαυμάσειε γὰρ εἰκότως τῶν μὲν τὸ ἁλουργὸν, τῶν δὲ τὸ χλοάζον, καὶ οἷς τὸ φοινικοῦν ἐπανθεῖ καὶ ὧν τὸ λευκὸν ἀπαστράπτει, ἔτι μέντοι καὶ οὓς ταῖς ἐναντιωτάταις ποικίλλει χροιαῖς ὥσπερ τις ζωγράφος ἡ φύσις." Procopius, *De aedeficiis* (see note 1), 1.1, 59-60 (p. 27).

[4] On stylistic figures as 'way-finders' see Carruthers, *The Craft of Thoughts* (see note 2), esp. pp. 116-170. See also Paul Binski, *Becket's Crown. Art and Imagination in Gothic England, 1170-1300*, New Haven (Connecticut): Yale Univ. Press, 2004, a book specifically concerned to give rhetorical context to twelfth- and thirteenth-century English architectural ornament.

[5] Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, ed. and transl. by Harry Caplan, London: Heinemann, 1954; IV.13. 18. While the *Ad Herennium* was not directly influential on medieval rhetoric masters much before the late twelfth century – and even then studied more frequently in northern Europe as a university subject than as a practical rhetoric – its advice articulates a basic teaching that was passed on through Cicero and Quintilian, and also Vitruvius and Horace and, in later antiquity, Martianus Capella and Cassiodorus, Priscian and Isidore. On the relationships among *ornatus*, *dignitas* and *varietas* see also Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik. Die Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*, 2 vols., Munich: Hueber, ^{2}1973 (^{1}1960), paragraph 257. 2b-258, and paragraph 538-539.

the verb *decet*, used when something is gracefully and fittingly adorned. It has to do with notions of worthiness and fitness. *Decet(-ere)* gives us, in English, both 'decorate' and 'decorum'. So for the *auctor ad Herennium*, *varietas* expresses the essence of what is fit and worthy, of that adornment which is one of the chief means of persuasion. For one should never lose sight that all rhetorical activity is directed towards a clear goal, to persuade some people to some action. Thus, style was never thought of as superficial excrescence, nor – and this is fundamental – as a transparent or passive conduit of the speaker's meaning to an equally passive recepticle which is 'the audience' (or to a wholly abstracted entity called 'the listener' or 'the reader', 'the viewer' or 'the performer'). As a mean of persuasion, of itself style has agency, for it affects *someone* in ways chanelled by convention and context. Someone is led, *ductus*, by those markers of style which set forth, *distinguere*, the work. This means as well that *dignitas*, 'worthiness', adheres not in any single element of style but rather in the relationship among them, heir 'variety'. One thing all by itself cannot produce 'variety', and so it cannot possess *dignitas*.

When the *auctor ad Herennium* discusses the three types of style, the *genera orationis*, he says that each style acquires its *dignitas* from the use that is made of the rhetorical figures:

> Distributed sparingly they set the oration in relief [*distinctam* [...] *reddunt orationem*], just as colors do; if too closely packed together they set it awry [*obliquam* or *oblitam*]. But in speaking we should vary the type of style [we use], so that the middle succeeds the grand and the simple the middle, and then again interchange them, and yet again, so that by variety [*varietate*] boredom [*satietas*] is easily avoided.[6]

Here *varietas* is given a perceptual justification, defined this time in terms of its effect on the audience's feelings; without enough *varietas*, an audience becomes satiated and bored. This effect is in addition to the formal (and equally practical) goal of marking or 'distinguishing' the composition. We might say that the experience as described, as a whole 'makes sense' (or fails to do so, because it produces formal confusion and/or sensory tedium). I linger over the precise mix of feeling and rational structure because the experience of *varietas* is fundamentally composed of these two elements

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[6] Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (see note 5), IV. xi. 16: "quae si rarae disponentur, distinctam sicuti coloribus, si crebrae conlocabuntur, obliquam [oblitam?] reddunt orationem. Sed figuram in dicendo commutare oportet, ut gravem mediocris, mediocrem excipiat adtenuata, deinde identidem commutentur, ut facile satietas vatietate vitetur"; transl. Caplan (see note 5).

together – esthetic experience 'makes sense' as a complexion of form and sensory perception.

The noun *satietas* may be glossed further out of Cicero, for it connotes not just tedium, but fatigue and disgust, even an esthetic kind of nausea, 'too much' of any single thing, no matter how good of itself. Cicero comments in his early *De inventione*, the ancient rhetoric best known directly through the whole Middle Ages,[7] that it is good to insert a joke or a tall tale or a terrible story or appalling incident into one's speeches: "for just as satedness and disgust [*satietas et fastidium*] for food is relieved or soothed by a tangy or sweet morsel, so a mind weary of listening is renewed by astonishment or refreshed by laughter".[8] This passage was commented on at some length by Augustine's friend Marius Victorinus, who interpreted it as concerning how to renew the *benevolentia* of an audience weary of listening.[9] As it was with Victorinus's commentary that the *De inventione* was best known to the Middle Ages, this passage became particularly emphasized.

Relieving tedium remained a chief justification for stylistic *varietas* in monastic meditation as well. In the words of Bernard of Clairvaux, employing a rhetorical commonplace, "varietas tollit fastidium" (variety relieves satedness).[10] *Taedium* is a pre-eminent monastic vice. The word is a close relative of *satietas*, but where *satietas* can mean simply 'satisfied', *taedium* is always negative. It is 'boredom', but tending toward annoyance and disgust, the condition of *fastidium*, a word always meaning disgust or loathing. The desert monks introduced the Greek term *acedia*, defined in Latin as tedium, *taedium animi*. As *acedia*, *taedium* brings spiritual drynesss, numbness of heart and of intellect. It is the 'noonday devil' of the desert contemplatives, an ever-present temptation for those whose task it was to pray continuously. Evagrius wrote in his *Praktikos* that

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[7] The western medieval transmission of ancient rhetoric is a complex matter, one affecting the Humanist 'revival' far more than has often been understood or credited. The essays, translated texts, and bibliography in Virginia Cox and John O. Ward (eds.), *The Rhetoric of Cicero in its Medieval and early Renaissance Commentary Tradition*, Leiden: Brill, 2006, are a good place to start.

[8] Cicero, *De inventione*, *De l'Invention* ed. and trans. by Guy Achard, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994: "Nam ut cibi satietas et fastidium aut subamara aliqua re relevatur aut dulci mitigatur, sic animus defessus audiendo aut admiratione integratur aut risu novatur." (I. xvii.25); *Cicero in twenty-eight volumes*, transl. by Harry M. Hubbell, vol. 2, London: Heinemann, repr. 1976 ([1]1949), I. 17.

[9] Marius Victorinus, *Explanationes in Ciceronis Rhetoricam*, ed. by Antonella Ippolito, Turnhout: Brepols, 2006, pp. 81-82.

[10] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia ad Guillelmum Abbatem*, ix. 201, in: *S. Bernardi opera omnia*, 8 vols., ed. by Jean Leclercq et al., Rome: Ed. Cistercienses, 1957-1977, vol 3, 1963, 97. 22.

> [...] the demon of *acedia* [...] is the one that causes the most serious trouble of all [...] he makes it seem that the sun barely moves [...] and that the day is fifty hours long [...] he constrains [the monk] to look constantly out the windows [...] he instills in [the monk] a hatred for the place, a hatred for his very life itself, a hatred of manual labor.[11]

Evagrius's characterization of *acedia* passed to Latin monasticism through John Cassian's *Institutes*, where in translation it became if anything a more serious problem: "When depression attacks the wretched monk it engenders a loathing for his situation, dislike of his cell, and contemptuous disparagement of his brethren."[12]

The role of *varietas* in monastic art is thus a more complex and nuanced matter than a perusal only of Bernard of Clairvaux's *Apologia* to William of St-Thierry might lead one to believe.[13] Bernard's famous invective in that work against installing carved monsters in the cloisters, especially at Cluny, has produced many responses, not least from modern art historians, seeking to justify those very monsters. These modern justifications are all made in moral and/or pedagogical terms. Here is a typical one, by an art historian writing in 2001 about the Romanesque capitals of the Cluniac monastery of St-Michel-de-Cuxa:[14]

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[11] "Ὁ τῆς ἀκηδίας δαίμον [...] πάντων τῶν δαιμόνων ἐστὶ βαρύτατος [...] μὲν τὸν ἥλιον καθορᾶσθαι ποιεῖ δυσκίνητον [...] πεντηκοντάωρον τὴν ἡμέραν δεικνύς [...] δὲ συνεκῶς ἀφορᾶν πρὸς τὰς θυρίδας [...] Ἔστ δὲ μῖσος πρὸς τὸν τόπον ἐμβάλλει καὶ πρὸς τὸν βίον αὐτόν, καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἔργον τὸ τῶν χειρῶν" Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos,* ch. 12, transl. with an introduction and notes by John E. Bamberger, Spencer (Mass.): Cistercian Publications, 1972, pp. 18-19; A. and C. Guillaumont (eds.), *Evagre le Pontique, traité pratique, ou, le moine* (Sources chrétiennes 170-171), Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1971, pp. 520-522.

[12] John Cassian, *The monastic Institutes. Consisting of On the Training of a Monk and the eight deadly Sins*, bk. 10, 2; transl. by Jerome Bertram, London: Saint Austin Press, 1999. p. 145; "Qui cum miserabilem obsederit mentem, horrorem loci, cellae fastidium, fratrum quoque [...] aspernationem gignit atque contemptum", Michael Petschenig (ed.), revised by Gottfried Kreuz, *Iohannis Cassiani De institutis coenobiorum et De octo principalium vitiorum remediis libri XII.* (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 17), Vienna: Verlag der Österreischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004 ([1]1888), p. 174

[13] Often cited as evidence for a strict Cistercian puritanism bordering on iconoclasm, this interpretation has been modified of late: see Conrad Rudolph, *The "Things of Greater Importance". Bernard of Clairvaux's 'Apologia' and the Medieval Attitude toward Art*, Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1990 and Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought* (see note 2), esp. pp. 84-87.

[14] The monastery is near Prades, in Catalonia, on one of the pilgrimage routes to Compostella. Half the cloister sculpture is still in situ; the other half installed in The Cloisters of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

> On a general level, the Cuxa capitals functioned [...] as stimuli to the active process of meditation. Seated on one of the benches within the colonnades [of the cloister], the monk would certainly be aware of the chaotic imagery of the capitals just above his head. There, if he were distracted from reading in books, as Bernard feared, the monk would find a concrete visualization of the phantasms, which drew in part on the monstrous creatures described in the psalms, but also more generally evoked his ongoing struggle against the Devil both in communal, liturgical prayer and psalmody and in private meditations. The very texts that the monks were reading in the cloister were often decorated with a similar repertoire of disturbing creatures.[15]

On this analysis, the vigorous scenes on the Cuxa capitals (like those at Moissac or at Vézelay) are to teach a monk to realize he must constantly struggle with the demons of his turbulent desires: "the monstrous and deformed bodies in the cloister [...] served on the most basic level to remind the monk of the ongoing battle with the enemy". I disagree. The goal of such fantastic creatures is not precept-based moral pedagogy. Rather their intention is esthetic, to create particular sensory experiences. And what experience do they provoke, these scenes of vigorous demonic activity, in the context of claustral study or liturgical prayer? *Varietas*, in the form of laughter (ridiculousness) or fearfulness (devils' torments) or *admiratio* (wonder at what is strange) for the bizarre and unexpected (which the monsters provide). They surprise us – they did then, they do now. Their very diversity and discord shocks one from the temptation to *taedium,* and its companions, *fastidium* and *satietas*. These scenes depict a struggle with demons, to be sure – Evagrius's 'noonday devil' had become basic monastic idiom, together with the seven other 'demons' characterized in the *Praktikos* – but the figures are not basically a 'reminder' of some lessons learned. They are not so conceptual. Those sculptures produce an immediate and positive *affectio animi*, 'affection of the soul', as it was known in medieval psychology. Thus, they do not represent a *possible* demonic struggle. They immediately relieve an *actual* one. Experiencing them in itself routs the noonday devil, for the *variety* they produce relieves tedium and refreshes a wearied mind.

So why is Bernard upset by them? As has been noted often, Bernard's scorn in his *Apologia ad Guillelmum Abbatum* is heaped upon the expense of the architecture – its *sumptuositas*. It is the symptom of vanity and avarice (two other of Evagrius's demons). Then at the very end of this chapter in *Apologia*, with the arresting hyperbole and chiastic antithesis so characteristic of him, he turns to decry the beasts and monsters found in the

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[15] Thomas E. A. Dale, "Monsters, Corporeal Deformities, and Phantasms in the Cloister of St-Michel-de-Cuxa", in: *The Art Bulletin* 83/2001, pp. 402-436, here p. 427.

cloister: fierce lions, filthy apes, a quadruped with a serpent's tail, a fish with an animal's head. Yet Bernard had a more complicated relationship with monsters than these words would suggest, one elegantly set out by Caroline Walker Bynum in her essay on "Hybrids in the Spirituality of Bernard of Clairvaux".[16] He is not opposed to monsters per se; indeed he famously called himself one, "I am a sort of chimera of my age".[17] He does oppose too much variety: "[t]am multa [...] tamque mira diversarum formarum apparet ibique varietas, ut magis legere libeat in marmoribus, quam in codicibus, totumque diem occupare singula ista mirando, quam in lege Dei meditando" (so multiple, so eye-catching a variety of diverse forms appears everywhere, that they would rather read in the marbles than in codices, and occupy the whole day admiring this one thing than meditating upon the law of the Lord).[18] These are the distractive works of the 'noon-day devil' again but produced this time not by lack but by excess – *multa mira varietas*, plentiful and astonishing variety. This variational excess is what Bernard elsewhere calls *curiositas*: excessive *varietas* in ancient rhetoric was also recognized as a fault.[19]

Bernard often links 'curiosity' with expensive display, *sumptuositas*, as he does in the *Apologia*. Hiring all those stone cutters to make complex historiated capitals offended him ethically. But his response is more complex. *Curiositas,* in monastic thought, causes inquietude and desire – this is why it is the antidote to tedium. Restlessness and desire are not in themselves always bad experiences; Bernard himself understood this. In his treatise *De diligendo Dei*, Bernard describes how the just will exult in God's sight and delight in unending gladness. "Here there is repletion (*satietas*) without disgust (*fastidium*): here insatiable curiosity without anxiety (*insatiabilis sine inquietudine curiositas*): here eternally constant and boundless desire not experiencing any lack."[20] In an Advent sermon

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[16] Caroline W. Bynum, "Monsters, Medians, and Marvellous Mixtures: Hybrids in the Spirituality of Bernard of Clairvaux", in: Caroline W. Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*. New York: Zone Books, 2001, pp. 113-162.

[17] Bernard of Clairvaux, Letter 250. 4 (addressed to Bernard the Carthusian), in: *Opera omnia* (see note 10), vol. 8, 1977, 147. 1-3: "Clamat ad vos mea monstruosa vita, mea aerumnosa conscientia. Ego enim quaedam Chimaera mei saeculi, nec clericum gero, nec laicum." See Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (see note 15), pp. 115- 120.

[18] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia*, xii. 29; in: *Opera omnia* (see note 10), vol. 3, 1963, 106. 21-24.

[19] Quintilian lumps together all sorts of stylistic excess as *cacozelon* or *mala adfectatio*, "bad taste"; in: M. Fabius Quintilianus, *Institutionis oratoriae libri duodecim*, ed. by Michael Winterbottom, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970, VIII. 3. 56-58.

[20] Bernard of Clairvaux, *De diligendo Dei*, 33, in: *Opera omnia* (see note 10), vol. 3, 1963, 147. 19-22: "Hinc illa satietas sine fastidio: hinc insatiabilis illa sine inquietu-

Bernard encourages his audience to question the mystery of Incarnation, using the familiar *circumstantiae* method of rational inquiry: *quis, unde, quo, ad quid, quando, qua*. Such curiosity, he says, is without doubt laudable and healthy.[21]

A quick search of the online Patrologia Latina suggests that *curiositas* was not a major concern of monastic writers before Bernard. Gregory the Great discusses *curiositas* only once in any detail, in a sermon on Lk. 14: 16- 24, the parable of the reluctant dinner guests. Their excuses are misdirections of the mind toward worldly concerns, which produce misjudgments of the occasion to which they have been invited. The guests only understand their external affairs and do not search within themselves, and such concern with tangential matters is rightly called *curiositas*, Gregory says. But Bede writes of the *pia curiositas* of the Marys at the Tomb on Easter, and of Peter's 'human curiosity' in entering it, as described in Matthew. Alcuin, sending a letter together with a florilegial work to two pious sisters, commends its contents to their curiosity about their reading materials (*curiositas legentium*).[22] There are other neutral or even positive uses of the word. But it is striking how little it figures before Bernard, and how much afterwards, and almost always in relation to *venustas* or style, whether found in the adornments of women and young men or of monumental church buildings. Applied to style, *curiositas* can be analysed as a failure of *ductus,* for the ornamentation only distracts; it does not mark the way(s) through, it is not useful. One incident can represent many others: Work on the Divinity School of the University of Oxford was recontracted in 1439, because of expense and delay, and the concerns of the university's dons (*sapientes)* about the excessive and superfluous curiosity of the work (*supervacuas curiositas*), in the form of crockets, babewyns, image niches, and the like.[23] Chaucer, who

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dine curiositas: hinc aeternum illud atque inexplebile desiderium, nesciens egestatem: hinc denique sobria illa ebrietas, vero, non mero ingurgitans, non madens vino, sed ardens Deo."

[21] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermo primus, In Adventu Domini*, in: *Opera omnia* (see note 10), vol. 4, 1966, 162. 2-5: "circa ea quae vere salutaria sunt sedula cogitatione versamini. Diligenter pensate rationem adventus huius, quaerentes nimirum quis sit qui veniat, unde, quo, ad quid, quando, et qua. Laudabilis sine dubio curiositas ista est et salubris."

[22] Alcuin says that he carefully selected patristic extracts that would pose no obscurities or contradictions, "veluti legentium curiositas facile probare poterit"; just such reading matters as your curiosity will easily be able to probe – from Letter 462, to Gisela and Richtrude, sent with a anthology of excerpts Alcuin had collected from the Church Fathers for them to study (*Patrologia latina* 100. 744 B-C).

[23] See Ralph H. C. Davis, "A Chronology of Perpendicular Architecture in Oxford", in: *Oxoniensia* 11-12/1946-47, pp. 75-89; transl. by Davis, here p. 79. Thanks to Paul

spent some time as Clerk of the King's Works, had perhaps a kinder view towards "curious" decoration; he praises a monumental building for its beautiful workmanship, "the cast [the design], the curiosite".[24] But the words describe the great house of the utterly whimsical and arbitrary Lady Fame, so one might be expected to raise an eyebrow over the dreamer's enthusiasm for its style.

So far, we have concerned ourselves with the effects of *varietas* upon sensibility and feeling, as both a way of analysing the purpose and formal character of style, and of assessing its effectiveness within a continuum of human feeling from tedium to distraction or even bewilderment. But we have not yet examined the nature of *varietas*, what it is that was thought to constitute pleasurable variety, and how that criterion shifted over the medieval millenium. I began this essay with Procopius on Hagia Sophia; it will be instructive to return to his ekphrasis of its variegated marbles. In that description, Procopius stresses the strong contrasts of the colours ("the most contrasting colours"), and the sudden leaps of the eye ("the vision constantly shifts suddenly") as one detail after another seizes his gaze – it is this, he says, that produces its sense of remarkable harmony. The space of Hagia Sophia is not monofocal but polyfocal, its harmony built from strong contrasts of diverse colours and materials and sudden shifts of view. It creates esthetic *varietas* through *mixtura* and *diversitas*; these are among the qualities Procopius emphasizes.

The ancient architectural orders, pleasing in their dignified variety, did not allow for such mixture. Indeed, an important distinction was maintained between *varietas* and *mixtura*. 'Mixture' has negative connotations in antiquity, both Greek and Latin, as productive of chaos and discord; in all canons of ancient style, mixture is a serious fault. Like all ancient rhetoric masters, when the *auctor ad Herennium* counseled "varying" the styles from one to another and back again, he did not think of this as mixing them. They retained their recognizable characters and the integrity or 'dignity' of their distinctive elements in relation to one another. But, as historians of architecture all know, the Christian emperor Constantine broke with these

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Binski for this citation, and for first making me aware of this curious tale during his 2007 Slade Lectures in Oxford. The word *babewyn* is a variant medieval spelling of *baboon*, and refers to the characteristic marginal grotesques and hybrids of late medieval decoration, especially in books but also architectural sculpture (a medieval Latin verb is recorded, *babuinare*: see *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *baboon*). Chaucer uses it of architectural decoration: Geoffrey Chaucer, *The House of Fame*, in: Larry D. Benson et. al. (eds.), *The Riverside Chaucer*, Boston (Mass.): Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

[24] Chaucer, *The House of Fame* (see note 23), v. 1178.

canons, and eclectically used bits of the old orders – the *spolia* – in his first buildings in Rome: the Arch of Constantine and the Lateran, occasioning a good deal of tongue-wagging at the time, and a lot of attention from historians (and popes and emperors) since. In an important article on this use of *spolia*, Beat Brenk emphasized how deliberate this stylistic mixing was, and indeed how costly to effect. Indeed, the wide use of *spolia* in monuments can be dated specifically to Constantine's building program in Rome, and it was not undertaken in ignorance or for want of building skills or materials. In the Lateran, green columns articulated the aisles and red ones the nave; Ionic and Corinthian capitals alternated for the first time. Brenk comments:

> Constantine's new aesthetics did not call for unity but rather for *varietas*. Permission was now granted to mix the long-established architectural orders. That was entirely new. [...] Constantine's court architects deliberately gave up the time-honored form canon and mixed the architectural orders.[25]

Brenk's comment needs some amending, for it is not the *varietas* that is new, but the rhetorical intent and persuasive effectiveness of the mixing.

As we have just seen, ancient *varietas* produced the experience of *dignitas*; 'fittingness'; it produced as well *suavitas* and also *gravitas*, 'seriousness'. In antiquity, variation involved an elegant articulation of the familiar, a persuasive harmony of the elements as they ought to be. But as we have seen, *varietas* is equally a canon of medieval styles, especially those associated with two chronologically separate movements: Cluniac monasticism and the thirteenth century movement we call the Gothic. Geoffrey of Vinsauf (whose *Poetria nova* of ca. 1205 is the best general guide I know to high medieval esthetic values) commends rich variety above all other qualities. A sample of his advice: "[...] proceed first of all by this step: although the meaning is one, let it not come content with one set of apparel. Let it vary its robes and assume different raiment." Or: "[...] let the mind's finger pluck its blooms in the field of rhetoric. But see that your style blossoms sparingly with such figures, and with a variety [...] From varied flowers a sweeter fragrance rises [...]"[26]

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[25] Beat Brenk, „Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne: Aesthetics versus Ideology", in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41/1987, pp. 103-109; here p. 105 f.

[26] "Hoc primo procede gradu: sententia cum sit/ Unica, non una veniat contenta paratu,/ Sed variet vestes et mutatoria sumat." (ll. 220-222) "Sic igitur cordis digitus discerpat in agro/ Rhetoricae flores ejus. Sed floreat illis/ Sparsim sermo tuus, variis, non creber eisdem,/ Floribus ex variis melior redolentia surgit [...]" (ll. 1225-1228). Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, ed. in: Edmond Faral, *Les arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle: recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du moyen âge*,

So what were the early medieval Christians up to when they so willfully violated the ancient canons? And why would *varietas* become for them such a distinctive principle, not only of their rhetoric and poetry but of their architecture, their grand prayer books, and their music? And in what did their sense of 'variety' consist? It is these questions that I will explore now; in doing so I am much indebted to Eric Auerbach's great essay on Christian Latin prose style, "Sermo humilis".[27]

One major factor in the later medieval cultivation of *varietas* as an esthetic value is the practice of monastic reading. To this a reliable guide is Peter of Celle's treatise "On Affliction and Reading" (another essential guide to medieval esthetic values). Peter of Celle (died circa 1187) was an Augustinian canon – a fact of some significance, for the Augustinians, Victorines in particular, are clearly emerging as key transmitters in northern Europe of monastic habits and disciplines of study to a broader secular and lay public in the later twelfth century, and through his many contacts, Peter played a significant role. He describes as follows the exercise (*exercitio*) of reading silently in one's cell:

> [...] [r]eading teaches [...] because it constantly tells of the clash of virtues and vices [...] Reading is the soul's food, light, lamp, refuge, consolation, and the spice of every spiritual savor. [...] [Reading] displays a steaming oven full of different kinds of bread, so that from them each person who hungers and thirsts for justice may be refreshed with the kind he chooses.[28]

Paris: Champion, 1924, v. 220-222 and v. 1225-1228 ; *Poetria nova*, transl. by Margaret F. Nims, Toronto: Pontificial Institute of Medieval Studies, 1967.

[27] Erich Auerbach, "Sermo humilis", in: Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, transl. by Ralph Manheim, London: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1965, pp. 27-66. Auerbach does not in fact talk about *varietas* per se, but rather the scandalously popular style of the Christian Bible in a context of the late classical canons of correctness or Latinitas. Auerbach emphasized how this style broke with the canons producing dignitas; this insight is fundamental.

[28] „Lectio ista docet quia uirtutum et uitiorum congressum tam continue narrat [...] Lectio animae est alimentum, lumen, lucerna, refugium, solatium, et condimentum omnium spiritalium saporum. [...] spirantem clibanum panibus plenum ostendit, ut de quo genere panum volerit esuriens et sitiens iustitiam reficiatur." The quotations are all from Peter of Celle, *De afflictione et lectione*, in: *La spiritualité de Pierre de Celle*, ed. by Jean Leclercq, Paris: Vrin, 1946, p. 234, ll 18-21, ll. 33-34.. The translation used is that of Hugh Feiss, *Peter of Celle: Selected Works*, Kalamazoo (Mich.): Cistercian Publications, 1987. The esthetic issues raised by this text are discussed at greater length in Mary J. Carruthers, "On Affliction and Reading, Weeping and Argument: Chaucer's Lachrymose Troilus in Context", in: *Representations* 93/2006, pp. 1-21. Peter also wrote a *Liber de panibus*, on the various 'breads' of the Bible

Peter emphasizes personal taste and choice among a great variety of breads. This is an effect of diversity: recall Procopius' emphasis on the ways that, within Hagia Sophia, his gaze is drawn variously from one to another detail. For Peter of Celle, reading is not an exercise in theology or moral philosophy – rather, it is esthetic, creating a diversity of experiences.

> According to the inclination of various feelings one should read now things new or then old, now obscure, then plain, now subtle, then simple, now examples, then commands, now something serious, then something lighthearted. If the soul is thus compassed about with such a harmonious variety, it will avoid boredom and receive its cure.[29]

A plain statement, and one that points again to the chief reason that the monks considered *varietas* to be a virtue: it dispels tedium.

Peter's last clause quoted above conceals an allusion (evident to his readers at the time) to Ps. 44 (45). 10, 14-15:

> filiae regum in honore tuo adstetit regina a dextris tuis in vestitu deaurato circumdata varietate.[...] omnis gloria eius filiae regis ab intus in fimbriis aureis circumamicta varietatibus [...][30]

Psalm 44 was read, correctly, as an epithalamium. In verse 10, the queen (bride) is described as dressed in a golden robe *circumdata varietate*; in verses 14-15 she is amongst her ladies in *aureis fimbriis circumamicta varietatibus*. In his commentary, Augustine linked the bride of this psalm to the Bride of the *Song of Songs* – that is, the Church – and he interpreted the varied colours of the queen's robe as follows:

> [...] this represents the mysteries of our teaching, and the variety of languages in which they are expressed. The African tongue is one, the Syriac another, the Greek another, the Hebrew another [...] [*sic*] and many others there are. These languages make up the variety with which the queen's gown is adorned.[31]

(*Patrologia latina* 202 929 A – 1046 D), which he dedicated to his friend John of Salisbury.

[29] "Secundum appetitum uero diuersarum affectionum nunc noua, nunc uetera, nunc obscura, nunc aperta, nunc subtilia, nunc simplicia, nunc exempla, nunc mandata, nunc seria, nunc iocosa legenda sunt, ut anima circumamicta tam concordi uarietate uitet taedium et sumat remedium." Peter of Celle, *De afflictione et lectione* (see note 28), p. 235 f.

[30] Psalm 44. 10, 14-15: "The daughters of kings have delighted thee in thy glory. The queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing; surrounded with variety. [...] All the glory of the king's daughter is within in golden borders, clothed round about with varieties"; Douay translation of the Vulgate (Gallican) text.

[31] "[...] sacramenta doctrinae in linguis omnibus uariis. Alia lingua afra, alia syra, alia graeca, alia hebraea, alia illa et illa: faciunt istae linguae uarietatem uestis reginae huius"; Augustinus Aurelius, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, ed. by Eligius Dekkers and

In this influential comment, Augustine defined *varietas* as *diversitas*: "Ecce uarietatem intelleximus de diuersitate linguarum [Thus we comprehend *varietas* with respect to diversity of languages]".[32] Echoing this same idea about 150 years later, Cassiodorus says in his commentary that "*varietas* here denotes either manifold tongues, because every nation hymns the Creator in church according to its native region, or the loveliest diversity of virtues", and he too uses the word *diversitas* synonymously with *varietas*.[33]

So Augustine and Cassiodorus, two of the most influential commentators on this important psalm text, both defined variety not as *dignitas* but as *diversitas*. Master scholars of rhetoric that both were, this lasting change of the textbook definition is significant. It is not the 'fitness' or 'worthiness' of the elements together as a whole that is emphasized, but rather their great differences which are nonetheless brought together. This was an astonishing breach of ancient stylistic decorum. Mixing diverse languages was identified as a stylistic fault by Quintilian, who called it *sardismos*. This fault is "a style made up of a mixture of several kinds of language [*mixta ex varia ratione linguarum*], for example a confusion of Attic with Doric, Aeolic with Ionic. We Romans", Quintilian continues, "commit a similar fault, if we combine the sublime with the mean, the ancient with the modern, the poetic with the vulgar, for this produces a monster like the one Horace invents at the beginning of his *ars poetica*",[34] which he then quotes. The lines were a

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Johannes Fraipont (*Corpus Christianorum series latina* 38), Turnhout: Brepols, 1956, p. 512, ll. 11-13; *The Works of Saint Augustine*, ed. by John E. Rotelle, part 3, vol. 16: *Expositions of the Psalms 33-50*, transl. by Maria Boulding, New York: New City Press, 2000, p. 302.

[32] *Erranationes in psalmos* (see note 31), p. 512, ll. 16; transl. Boulding, *Expositions of the psalms* (see note 31), p. 302. Augustine repeats this idea when glossing verse 15: "in fimbriis autem aureis uarietas linguarum doctrinae decus" (*Erranationes in psalmos* [see note 29], p. 515, ll. 22-23); "in her gold fringes [*fimbriis*] is a variety of tongues, setting forth the splendour of her teaching"; transl. Boulding, *Expositions of the psalms* (see note 31), p. 306.

[33] "Sed hic uarietatem, aut linguas multiplices significat, quia omnis gens secundum suam patriam in Ecclesia psallit auctori; aut uirtutum pulcherrimam diuersitatem." Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*,, 2 vols., vol. 1: 1-70, ed. by Marcus Adriaen (*Corpus Christianorum series latina* 97), Turnhout: Brepols, 1958, p. 410, ll. 313-316, *Cassiodorus: Explanation of the Psalms*, transl. by Patrick G. Walsh, vol. 1, New York: Paulist Press, 1990, p. 447.

[34] "Σαρδισμός quoque appellatur quaedam mixta ex uaria ratione linguarum oratio, ut si Atticis Dorica et Aeolica et Iadica confundas. Cui simile uitium est apud nos si quis sublimia humilibus, uetera nouis, poetica uulgaribus misceat – id enim tale monstrum quale Horatius in prima parte libri de arte poetica fingit [...]" Quintilian, *Inst. orat.* (see note 19), VIII. 3. 60; *The Orator's Education*, transl. by Donald A. Russell,

famous esthetic statement: would it not be a spectacle raising derision if a painter chose to join a human head to a horse's neck and to put a variety of feathers everywhere on its gathered limbs, or made a beautiful woman devolve into a ugly fish?[35] Augustine would certainly have known of this strong ancient dislike for mixing. He has ostentatiously violated it by praising linguistic diversity as an essential quality of redemption, one of many occasions when he departs from ancient canons.

In his psalm commentary Augustine is quick to emphasize the unity from which the Church's multiple diversity is generated, multiplicity expressed from and expressing a simplex. Usually this idea is attributed to his Neoplatonism, and this undoubtedly was influential. Also significant is I *Corinthians* 12. 4, which celebrates the diverse community of the Church: "divisiones vero gratiarum sunt idem autem Spiritus". But there is a commonplace rhetorical idea behind Augustine's formulation as well, which incorporates the notion of the persuasive *colores* of rhetoric, and as well perhaps the notion embedded in Greek *poiesis*, composition as 'making' something from many different colours. The Greek word applied especially to embroideries (as Latin *textus* did to weaving). For Augustine, the resultant cloth, the variegated robe of the Bride of psalm 44, shares the emphasis on strong diversity characteristic of post-Constantinian antiquity. For the colours' variation is contrasted in Augustine's commentary to 'gold', the unchanging simplex – 'unus' – which they clothe so diversely. It is not the colours' 'fittingness' but their sharp 'difference' which Augustine emphasizes (*dignitas* does not occur in this passage). Yet all these manifold tongues express one faith: "Quomodo autem uarietas uestis in unitate concordat sic et omnes linguae ad unam fidem." But in what way? The metaphor he chooses, though common, is worth examining.

Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard Univ. Press, 2001. See also Lausberg, *Handbuch* (see note 5), paragraph 1074. Renaissance rhetoric masters preferred the term *soraismos* (see Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 2nd edition, Berkeley (Calif.): Univ. of California Press, 1991 ([1]1968), p. 142). Both readings are based on early manuscripts of Quintilian; Winterbottom (see note 20) prefers *sardismos*.

[35] Horace, *Ars poetica*, in *Q. Horatius Flaccus Opera*, ed. by David R. Shackleton-Bailey, (Bibliotheca Teubneriana). Munich and Leipzig: Saur, [4]2001 ([1]1985); ll. 1-5: "Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam/ iungere si velit et varias inducere plumas/ undique colatis membris, ut turpiter atrum/ desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,/ spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?".

> But what is the gold [i. e. what is unchanging] in that same variety? Wisdom itself. Whatever the variety of tongues may be, one 'gold' is preached: not a diversity of 'golds', but variety concerning the 'gold'. Indeed all tongues preach one wisdom, one doctrine and discipline. There is variety in tongues, 'gold' in their sense.[36]

Augustine's distinction between languages (which have *varietas*) and *sententia* (the 'gold' of faith which does not change) is presented at greater length in his *De doctrina christiana*,[37] and there as throughout his writing their relationship proves difficult to define. Indeed he is well aware, in *De doctrina*, of the potential of *varietas* for schism and heresy, as he also indicates in his comment on psalm 44.10: "In ueste uarietas sit, scissura non sit" (May there be variety in the garment, but not rending). For all its persuasive virtue – a virtue which, as we have seen, is constrained in ancient practice by accepted conventions concerning *dignitas – varietas* can be politically and institutionally dangerous. Like so many other esthetic terms from the middle ages, *varietas,* perhaps especially as *diversitas,* is ambiguous, active simultaneously *in bono et in malo*. It is perhaps worth recalling in this context Augustine's wry comment in *The City of God*, that God must have employed the rhetorical figure of antithesis when He fashioned human beings.[38] For Augustine, diverse verbal colours fittingly mark out and adorn sentential 'gold', the idea is familiar from rhetoric, as the orator is trained to clothe the sense (*sententia*) of his matter in pleasingly various verbal figures and tropes (*colores*). As a statement about verbal signification this is inadequately vague for philosophy. It makes better sense in art. Just such a contrast between variety of colours and golden simplex is apparent later as a principle of Byzantine mosaic composition – and as has often been noted, the gold glass *tesserae* catch and distribute light to the colours.[39] Augustine wrote well before the sixth

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[36] "[I]n ipsa autem uarietate aurum quod est? Ipsa sapientia. Quaelibet sit uarietas linguarum, unum aurum praedicatur: non diuersum aurum, sed uarietas de auro. Eamdem quippe sapientiam, eamdem doctrinam et disciplinam omnes linguae praedicant. Varietas in linguis, aurum in sententiis"; in: *Erranationes in psalmos* (see note 31), p. 512, ll. 17-22 (my translation).

[37] See esp. *De doctrina christiana,* ed. by Joseph Martin (*Corpus Christianorum series latina* 32), Turnhout: Brepols, 1962, III, 10.14 - 14.22.

[38] See *City of God*, XI. 18. Similar ambivalence can be found in his extravagant praise – yet caution – concerning the value of *dulcedo*; see Mary J. Carruthers, "Sweetness", in: *Speculum* 81/2006, pp. 99-113. Esthetic values are treated *in bono et in malo* typically by medieval writers, a fact historians should keep in mind. Augustine's famously equivocal yet passionate love for music (and ancient poetry) is characteristic of his sensibility.

[39] See e. g. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration* (see note 1), pp. 35-37. On the vexed question of the earliest uses of glass tesserae, including the ones made with gold, see

century when the earliest of the great glass *tesserae* mosaics that survive were first constructed, but his well-known *sententia* found its clearest expression through their means.

Augustine's psalm commentary did not cause this significant change of cultural perception concerning diversity and mixture, but his words certainly reflect it and helped to give it authority. We cannot now understand how the change came about solely by examining the ancient pedagogies of rhetoric and their transmission. The new taste for diversity must owe a great deal to esthetic conventions and social realities of the late empire – fostering perhaps that same taste which prompted Constantine's architects to vary the elements of the old orders through a studied, even an aggressive diversity. Cassiodorus adds the following thought about Ps. 44 to Augustine's. The *varietas* of the bride's robe is also like the diversity of gifts, of virtues, which the faithful possess. Indeed, he says it is like the church itself: "Quibus diuersitatibus induta, necesse est discolori amictu catholica uestiatur Ecclesia; [Clothed with their diversity (of virtues), of necessity the universal church is dressed in a multicolored garment]." He continues: "The garments of Aaron likewise conveyed this, for they were woven of gold, purple, fine linen, crimson, and violet."[40]

The very concept of harmony is changed as one's emphasis shifts from imagining fittingness to imagining diversity as a desirable stylistic norm, even the governing norm. In classical antiquity, the variety of elements was fitted together as they were made 'worthy' within a concordant whole – as parts of that whole, they acquired *dignitas*. In the Christians' esthetic, the elements are perceived as producing harmony through (or despite) their very discordance and many colours; the emphasis is on their *diversitas*. The change can be measured in the following incident, described around 1481 by the Dominican friar, Felix Fabri. Describing the pilgrim crowds as his own company approached the Holy Land, he writes of how they all began to sing a hymn together in their boats,

> [...] each man singing it according to the music of his own choir [*secundum notam chori sui*]. I have never heard so sweet and joyous a song, for there were many voices, and out of their multiple different sounds sweet discant and harmony were made in a particular way; for all alike sang the same words, but through their notes they 'dissonated' in a sweet melody, and it was very pleasant to hear so many

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Liz James, "Byzantine Glass Mosaic Tesserae: some Material Considerations", in: *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 30/2006, pp. 29-47.

[40] Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum,* 44.15: "Hoc et uestis illa significauit Aaron, quae auro, purpura, bysso, cocco hyacinthoque contexta est."; *Expositio psalmorum* (see note 33), p. 412, ll. 413-415; transl. Walsh, *Explanation of the psalms* (see note 33), p. 447.

> clerics simultaneously join in one song out of pure joy. There were many Latin clergy, Sclavonians, Italians, Lombards, Gauls, Franks, Germans, Englishmen, Irishmen, Hungarians, Scots, Dacians, Bohemians, and Spaniards, and many who spoke the same tongue, but came from different [*diversis*] dioceses, and belonged to different [*diversis*] religious orders. Wondrously [*mirabile*] all these sang Te Deum.[41]

Evidently friar Felix knew his Cassiodorus. Out of the multiple songs of the pilgrims sweet harmony is made, yet in their multiplicity each remains distinct; they are not homogenized. Indeed they form a sort of audible *mappamundi*, the entire Church diversely singing – which is of course Felix Fabri's point.

An emphasis upon harmony as diversity is found throughout the Middle Ages. The ninth-century music treatise, *Musica enchiriadis*, presents a similar view of harmony as *discordia concors*: "Through these numerical relationships [=the Boethian ratios], by which unlike sounds concord with each other, the eternal harmony of life and of the conflicting elements of the whole world is united as one with material things."[42] And in his *Micrologus*, Guido d'Arezzo describes musical harmony by emphasizing difference and change;

> [...] hearing takes pleasure in a variety of sounds, as sight delights in variety of colours, smell is aroused by a variety of odours, and the tongue delights in changing savours. Thus through the body's windows, the agreeableness [*suavitas*] of the things compatible with it [*habilium rerum*] wondrously enters the innards of

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[41] "Nunquam audivi tam laetum et suavem cantum. Erant enim voces multae, et ex multiplici dissonatis dulcis quodamodo discantus et harmonia causabatur. Nam omnes eadem quidam verbam sonabant, sed notis quadam suavi modulatione dissonabant, et jocundum valde fuit audire tot clericos simul eundem cantum concinere ex laetitia. Ibi erant clerici latini multi, sclavi, italici, lombardi, gallici, franci, theutonici, anglici, hibernici, ungari, scoti, daci, bohemi et hispani, et multi euidem quidam linguae, sed de diversis dioecesibus et de diversis ordinibus. Et hic omnes mirabile Te Deum cantabant."; *Fratris Felicis Fabri Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae, et Egypti peregrinationem*, ed. by Konrad Hassler, 3 vols, vol. 2, Stuttgart: Societatis Literariae Stuttgardiensis, 1843, p. 184; Felix Fabri (circa 1480-1483), *Wanderings in the Holy Land*, transl. by Aubrey Stewart, London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1892. My thanks to Dr. Kathryne Beebe of St Hilda's College, Oxford for calling my attention to this passage.

[42] "isdem numerorum partibus, quibus sibi collati inaequales soni concordant, et vitae cum corporibus et compugnantiae elementorum totiusque mundi concordia aeterna coierit": *Musica enchiriadis*, ed. by Hans Schmid, *Musica et scolica enchiriadis, una cum aliquibus tractatulis adjunctis*, Munich: Bayer. Akad. der Wiss., 1981, cap. xviii. 58-61; *Musica enchiriadis*, transl. by Leonie Rosenstiel, Colorado Springs: Colorado College Music Press, 1976. Thanks to members of the Covent Garden Seminar, convened by Professor Susan Rankin, for a lively exchange concerning *varietas* in early music, during which these passages were discussed.

> the heart. Thus it is that the health of both heart and body is lessened or increased according to particular tastes and smells and likewise the sight of specific colours.[43]

As we know most recently from Bruce W. Holsinger,[44] the corporeal effect of music is an enduring theme in medieval literary writing about music. But there is an enduring core of medical writing as well about the therapeutic effects of all sensory experience – sounds, and colours, and smells. And of course ancient medicine was based upon regimens of diet, in which balancing the mixture of the body was the key to wholeness, *sanitas*. The model of human health inherited from Galenic medicine was that of a tensed balance of opposing elements and humours always threatening to go out of tune. In the words of Caroline W. Bynum, "[...] the Galenic person is, in a sense, an entity of multiples."[45] Moreover this biological complexion of elements – and complexion is their word for it – mirrors the most profound mystery of the Christian religion. It is perhaps in the exegesis of this mystery – the Incarnation – that a second major clue can be found to why the Christians so abruptly, aggressively, and tenaciously shifted their sense of what constituted appropriate *varietas* (what Guido calls *varietas rationabilis*).[46] Bynum cites Bernard of Clairvaux's third sermon for Christmas Eve, in which Bernard explores the earthly nature of Jesus as a miraculous mixture. This marks his human nature itself, for humans are all mixtures. But the *mixtura* of God and human which took place in the Virgin's womb is a yet greater marvel, even a kind of monstrosity:

> There are three works, three mixtures [*tres mixturas*], that the all-powerful majesty did in assuming our flesh – so singularly marvellous and marvellously singular that nothing like them has been or ever will be done on earth. [...] Wonderful are these mixtures, and more marvellous than any miracle, for so diverse [*tam diversa*] and even so opposed [*tamque divisea*] to one another, they were joined together. And indeed consider the creation, the ordering of its parts! God mixed [*miscuit*] the vile

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[43] Guido d'Arezzo, *Micrologus*, ed. by Joseph Smits von Waesberghe, Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1955, xiv. 159-160; my translation, consulting that of Warren Babb in: Claude V. Palisca (ed.), *Hucbald, Guido, and John on music: three medieval treatises*, New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1978: "Nec mirum si varietate sonorum delectatur auditus, cum varietate colorum gratuletur visus, varietate odorum foveatur olfactus, mutatisque saporibus lingua congaudeat. Sic enim per fenestras corporis habilium rerum suavitas intrat mirabiliter penetralia cordis. Inde est quod sicut quibusdam saporibus et odoribus vel etiam colorum intuitu salus tam cordis quam corporis vel minuitur vel augescit.".

[44] Bruce W. Holsinger, *Music, body, and desire in medieval culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer*, Stanford (Calif.): Stanford Univ. Press, 2001.

[45] Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (see note 16), p. 144.

[46] Guido d'Arezzo, *Micrologus* (see note 43), xiv. p. 167.

> slime of earth with vital force [...] And to honor [man] more, he united in his person God and slime, majesty and lowliness, such vileness and such sublimity [...] This is the first and most excellent mixture [*mixtura*]. [...] the first mixture is a poultice to cure infirmities. The two species are ground and mixed together in the Virgin's womb as in a mortar, with the Holy Spirit the pestle sweetly mixing them.[47]

To compare this statement with this same Bernard's invective against monstrosities in the cloister is to understand the complexity both of his own love of hyperbolic paradox – itself stylistically a wonderful mixture of slime and sublimity – and the distance travelled by *varietas* from the emphasis on *dignitas* in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* to the high and late Middle Ages. Bernard embraces those same horrid mixtures that for Horace are objects of derision and signs of incompetence, as indeed did both the Romanesque style of his own time and the later Gothic. He may appear Horatian at first blush, his *Apologia* condemnation of curiosity certainly alludes to Horace with apparent approval, but his esthetic sensibility is by no means Horatian.

The shift of taste so perceptible in early Christian style, culminating in what would have seemed to Horace not pleasing variety but an embrace of perverse mixtures, seems to me to be the result of two profound developments. One is the perceived (and actual) nature of the Church from its earliest Pentecostal days, whose diversity is recorded in Acts, theologized in I *Corinthians*, and celebrated in the commentators' understanding of Psalm 44.[48] Historians of rhetoric have long noted that medieval masters emphasize how a preacher must constantly be aware of the great differences

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[47] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermo tertius, In Vigilia Nativitatis*, in: *Opera omnia* (see note 10), vol. 4, transl. Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (see note 16), p. 122: "Tria opera, tres mixturas fecit omnipotens illa maiestas in assumptione nostrae carnis, ita mirabiliter singularia et singulariter mirabilia, ut talia nec facta sint, nec facienda sint amplius super terram. Coniuncta quippe sunt ad invicem Deus et homo, Mater et virgo, fides et cor humanum. Admirabiles istae mixturae, et omni miraculo mirabilius, quomodo tam diversa, tamque divisa ab invicem, invicem potuere coniungi. [216. 27-217.3] [...] In creatione vide quam multa et quam magna potenter creata sunt;[217. 6-7] [...] Huic enim limo terreno vim vitalem miscuit [217.9] [...] [V]t quod melius habebat [217.17] [...] limo nostro coniungeret, et in persona una sibi invicem unirentur Deus et limus, maiestas et infirmitas, tanta vilitas et sublimitas tanta.[217.18-19] [...] Haec est prima et superexcellens mistura; et haec prima inter tres.[216. 2-3] [...] In prima remedium est, quia ex Deo et homine cataplasma confectum est, quod sanaret omnes infirmitates tuas. Contusae sunt autem et commistae hae duae species in utero Virginis, tanquam in mortariolo; Sancto Spiritu, tanquam pistillo, illas suaviter commiscente [219. 13-18]".

[48] See the account in Acts 2: 1-13. The narrative emphasizes the fact that every person heard the apostolic preaching in their own language (compare Peter of Celle's celebration of the diversity of the Biblical texts as 'breads').

in his audiences and speak variously to them. Ancient rhetoricians never made such concessions, for they did not speak to masses but to 'judges', in both forensic and deliberative orations; later a *rhetor* spoke to and for the emperor. The difference of intention is well articulated in Augustine's practical work for preachers, *De catechizandis rudibus*:

> And when we are speaking in such a way [that is, preaching], there may be just a few people present or many, educated or uneducated or a mixture of both, city-dwellers or country-people or these and those together, or a crowd composed of all kinds of people. It is not possible but that in one way or another they will affect those who are about to speak and teach, and that the address which is produced, because of the emotions of the soul from which it is delivered, displays as it were a kind of facial expression, and by that same diversity diversely affects the listeners, even as they in turn variously influence one another in its presence.[49]

Suffice it to observe that no previous manual of rhetoric had emphasized this point in this way – they simply do not imagine speaking to an audience so diverse.

Another profound influence favouring the revaluation of ancient stylistic canons was, I think, having to make the apologetic case for the Incarnation, to the Romans and Greeks in particular. Well before Constantine, Tertullian wrote of the Incarnation as follows: "jam erit substantia Jesus ex duabus, ex carne et spiritu mixtura quaedam, ut electrum ex auro et argento" [for the substance of Jesus will be of two things, a sort of mixture from body and spirit, like electrum from gold and silver].[50] The mixture of human and divine was scandalous foolishness not just conceptually but also because it abused antique esthetic experience, a *decorum* based on *dignitas*. A couple of centuries later, well after the Christians had established themselves,

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[49] Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, xv. 23, ed. by Joseph B. Bauer (*Corpus Christianorum series latina* 46), Turnhout: Brepols, 1969, p. 147, ll. 16-24: "[...] et cum ita dicimus, utrum pauci adsint an multi; docti an indocti an ex utroque genere mixti; urbani an rustici an hi et illi simul; an populus ex omni hominum genere temperatus sit. Fieri enim non potest, nisi aliter atque aliter afficiant locuturum atque dicturum, et ut sermo qui profertur, affectionis animi a quo profertur, quemdam quasi uultum gerat, et pro eadem diuersitate diuerse afficiat auditores, cum et ipsi se ipsos diuerse afficiant inuicem praesentia sua." The word I have translated as "facial expression", *vultus*, is the technical term used in discussing rhetorical delivery, and is usually found in conjunction with *gestus* and *vox*.

[50] Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, c. 27, ed. by Aloisius Gerlo (*Corpus Christianorum series latina* 2), Turnhout: Brepols, 1954, p. 1199, ll. 43-46: "Si enim sermo ex transfiguratione et demutatione substantiae caro factus est, una iam erit substantia Iesus ex duabus, ex carne et spiritu, mixtura quaedam, ut electrum ex auro et argento." This makes what we would call a compound, a "tertium quid," as Tertullian says, neither gold, nor silver: and thus not really a mixture but only a sort-of mixture, "mixtura quaedam".

Augustine wrote a letter, also explaining the Incarnation as a mixture. As a person is a mixture of soul and body, so Christ is a mixture of flesh and God: "[...] persona hominis mixtura est animae et corporis; persona autem Christi mixtura est Dei et hominis."[51] And then he seems to pause and cast a glance towards Horace and his beloved Cicero: "si tamen non *indigne* ad ista mixtionis vel mixturae nomen admittitur" [if indeed the name of *mixtio* or *mixtura* may not unfittingly be applied to this phenomenon].[52] Notice that adverb, *indigne*. Tertullian could care less about ancient *dignitas* – he would as soon have put paid to the whole project. Bernard of Clairvaux inhabited a completely different esthetic world, in which monstruous mixtures have their honored places as embodying the bold antitheses and paradoxes that define his sensibility as well as his thought. Augustine seems still to be caught between worlds – but that position entirely fits his dignity.

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[51] Augustine, Letter 137 (78). 11 to Volusianus, in: *S. Aureli Augustini Opera*, ed. by Alois Goldbacher, Sect. 2, P. 3: *Epistulae* 124-184 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 44), Vienna: Österr. Akad. der Wiss., 1904, 110.8-9.

[52] Augustine, Letter 137 (78) (see note 51), 111.4-5.