

MEDIEVAL LATIN: A GUIDE TO REFERENCE WORKS

Shami Ghosh, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto, September 2023†

§0 Preamble

This document is intended to provide a handy guide to the more important works of reference for North American students working with Medieval Latin texts of all kinds. For this reason, preference is given to works in English, with comparable works in other languages thus omitted. However, in many cases the best works of reference are in French, German, or Italian, and when nothing comparable in English exists, works in these languages have been listed.

This guide is arranged in three parts, of which the first is arranged in three sections. Part I.a gives guidance on how to use dictionaries at an advanced level; I.b provides information about a range of dictionaries; Part I.c surveys a small selection of other useful lexical aids. Parts II and III cover, respectively, other tools for Medieval Latin language beyond vocabulary (II); and Medieval Latin literature (III). It is hoped that students in particular will be able to use this guide to locate the most suitable research tools for their particular projects and interests, and also those works of reference that will help them gain a sense of the history of Medieval Latin language and literature in this period.

Part I.a How to use dictionaries

§1 Beginners may be content with simply looking up a definition of a word in a dictionary following a lemma, and (hopefully) also considering the grammatical information provided concerning the part of speech, declension/conjugation, principal parts, and so on. But as one proceeds to a more advanced level, this is not only no longer sufficient, it is also often not even possible since there is, in scholarly dictionaries, a good deal of other information that precedes the definition. In order to use a dictionary effectively, it is essential (i) to understand how it works, and (ii) to go beyond the first thing that occurs after the lemma.

§2 Scholarly dictionaries (as opposed to those intended for use in schoolrooms) will generally provide at least the following information for each word, though not necessarily in this order: part of speech; principal parts of verbs; conjugation for verbs; the genitive singular for nouns; gender of nouns; declension of nouns; the nominative singular in all genders for adjectives; citations and/or dates; in some cases some etymological information as well; and of course the definitions, which will include a number of different usages (see for example §7 below).

§3 ‘Part of speech’ is a category of word or lexical item (potentially one or more words that together form a unit) that normally behaves in the same manner syntactically every time it occurs. Words that are of the same part of speech normally perform the same sort of function in a sentence. Parts of speech include (but are not restricted to) verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. The definition of the part of speech will almost invariably be given in abbreviated form in any dictionary, for example: ‘v’ = ‘verb’; ‘conj.’ = ‘conjunction’ (NB: the

† I am deeply indebted to Cillian O’Hogan and Elisa Brilli: Cillian for alerting me to many references I was unaware of, had forgotten, or had misjudged the importance of, and other incisive criticisms; and Elisa for cleaning up some structural confusions and trying to prevent my writing from being too intemperate. I have also benefitted from the suggestions of Will Robins and the comments of Lawrin Armstrong, Emma Gabe, and Laura Moncion. Omissions and infelicities remain of course my own responsibility, and Elisa is not to be blamed for remaining evidence of my prejudices.

conjugation is normally indicated only by a number; ‘conj.’ will not normally be an abbreviation for ‘conjugation’ in dictionaries, even if it frequently is in grammars). It is important to be familiar with the abbreviations used, particularly if consulting a dictionary not in one’s first language. This can be tedious, since dictionaries frequently use a large number of abbreviations; but omitting to look up the abbreviations can lead to serious mistakes of translation.

§4 Citations and dates are often fundamental pieces of information without which a proper understanding of a word’s usage might be difficult to ascertain, and students must always pay close attention to such information. These are rarely given in dictionaries intended for school use (such as *Cassell’s*), but are invariably present in scholarly dictionaries. A word’s meaning in a text from the later fourteenth century might not be the same as in a text from the later fourth century, and perusing the definitions and the citations and dates will be important in helping you assess which definition is most appropriate for the text in question. There can be similar differences in meaning, even for the same period, across different geographical regions. Citations will often include both a quote, and the name of the author or text; in some cases only a date might be given. The names of authors or texts will always be given in abbreviated form, and particularly where no date is given it is crucial that one is able to decipher the abbreviation.

§5 The definitions may themselves be arranged in several paragraphs, sections, or columns, which may or may not themselves be numbered or otherwise distinguished. The ordering of these definitions may follow a temporal principle (earlier meanings listed first), but it may also follow some other organisational principle, such as the meaning that (in the opinion of the dictionary’s editor) occurs most frequently within the specific corpus used for that specific dictionary, or the strictly etymological meaning of the word. It can be helpful to know the logic behind how the entries in the dictionary are arranged, and it is certainly not advisable to assume a priori that the first definition given is more likely to be the best one for the word you are looking up in the context in which you have encountered it.

§6 As an example, let us examine the beginning of the entry for ‘habeo’ in Lewis and Short (§8):
hābēo, ūi, itum, 2 (archaic **perf. subj.** habessit, CIC. *Leg.* 2, 8, 19; inf. haberier, PLAUT. *Mil.* 2, 6, 111 (591)), v. a. and n. [etym. dub.; cf. Gr. ἄπην, handle; Lat. capio; Germ. haben, Haft; Engl. have], **to have**, in the widest sense of the word, **to hold, keep, possess, cherish, entertain, occupy, enclose, contain** (cf.: teneo, possideo, etc.).

After the principal parts and conjugation we are provided in parentheses some archaic variations with citations. The first citation is for an archaic perfect subjunctive *habessit*, used by Cicero in his *De legibus*. The second is for an archaic infinitive *haberier*, used by Plautus in his *Miles gloriosus*. After the parentheses, we are told that this is a v.(erb) that is an a.(ctive) verb, and that it can also be a n.(euter noun). There follows an etymological excursus in square brackets; and finally a summary set of definitions, with some comparisons provided in parentheses. (Note that a very common sense of *habere*, ‘to consider’, is not included among the summary definitions, and occurs quite far down in the very long entry for this word.)

a. It is worth noting that Lewis and Short’s etymologies are usually but not always sound, and there has been much research in this field since its publication; for work of this sort, etymological dictionaries are what must be consulted.

§7 This information might be sufficient for some contexts, and some entries might provide much less information than this, or not very much more. But in many cases usages that are in fact quite common might be listed quite far down in the entry, with no indication in the summary definitions at the head that such usages even exist. To take another example from *Lewis and Short* (§8), the

summary definitions given at the head of the entry for *carpo* are **to pick, pluck, pluck off, cull, crop, gather**, but definition II.B.3 provides the following:

Viam, iter, etc., or with definite local substantives, terram, mare, litora, etc., **to go, tread upon, pass over, navigate, sail along or through, to take or pursue one's way** (syn. ire)

Here, the fact that the entry begins with a noun in the accusative indicates that this usage will always take a noun in the accusative. The parentheses at the end indicate that this word is in this usage synonymous with the verb *ire*. As is normal in Lewis and Short, section II of the entry carries the abbreviation *Trop.*, which means ‘in a tropical or figurative sense’, and seven definitions are listed here, in contrast to the three in the first section of the entry. This illustrates the point that a word might have more uses in a tropical or figurative sense than in a more literal or etymological sense, and the frequency with which you encounter one meaning in the wild need not have anything to do with how far up in the list of definitions it occurs in the dictionary. (‘Tropical’ here has nothing to do with the equatorial region, but rather to tropes.) It can be useful to go over the tropical definitions first to exclude them, and with luck, the meaning that fits best will be found there; this could save you the time of ploughing through a number of definitions that might not be so useful. It cannot be sufficiently stressed that it is therefore crucial to peruse the entry for any word carefully, paying due consideration to a variety of definitions and the citations given therein. In many cases, the entry will also provide specific idiomatic uses that would be impossible to guess from the first definition; these will almost invariably occur in later rather than earlier sections of the entry.

a. It bears repeating that it is worth actually reading the entries in full—which includes reading the examples cited, and checking the dates, regions, and context whence the citations are taken—in order to judge which definition is most appropriate for the immediate purpose; simply reading all the definitions, or even doing that and checking the dates, is not enough.

Part I.b A selection of dictionaries to use for different purposes

§8 The first point of reference for a medievalist will almost invariably be *A New Latin Dictionary founded on the Translation of Freund's Latin–German Lexicon*, edited by Charlton T Lewis and Charles Short, first published in 1879 at Oxford by the Clarendon Press and frequently reprinted (and now available online at [Perseus](#) and [Logeion](#) (§15) and the Brepols [Database of Latin Dictionaries \(DLD\)](#) (§15)), commonly known as Lewis and Short. Although primarily a dictionary of Classical Latin, it also includes (albeit not comprehensively or even necessarily systematically) citations from late antique literature up to the sixth century, and thus, crucially, from the Vulgate Bible, and Augustine and Ambrose, Prudentius, and Justinian's legal compilations. (Line references are not, however, necessarily to be trusted.) Given how deeply Medieval Latin was influenced by early Christian writers, their inclusion makes Lewis and Short infinitely preferable for the medievalist to any other standard Classical Latin dictionary. Eventually, it will sort of be replaced by the [Thesaurus Linguae Latinae \(TLL\)](#), a massive German project. By the time the *TLL* is completed this reference guide will doubtless be woefully outdated, and its author almost certainly dead.

a. The *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, a project founded in 1894, which the founder claimed would contain biographies of words rather than definitions, is based on the complete corpus of Latin—but only until around 636, when Isidore of Seville died. For that period, it is the fundamental reference work, but it remains incomplete, with a projected date of completion now c.2050. It's worth knowing about and worth using, but its interface can appear unfriendly at first, the definitions are in Latin, and while the sheer mass of citations is one of its greatest virtues, it can also make *TLL* feel too overwhelming for regular use. Nevertheless, certainly once it is complete, and even before then for the period and part of the alphabet it covers, it is certainly the most reliable tool available. Aware of the somewhat rebarbative appearance of their work, its creators

have provided a helpful guide to navigating the [TLL](#), which should be used alongside the [praemonenda](#) for the online version. This is available in pdf format in various languages, including, most importantly, Latin.

§9 Lewis and Short is not, however, sufficient even for late antique Latin, and certainly not for later periods. While Augustine and Ambrose are included, many other writers of the same period are not; and obviously, as the language developed in different regions over the thousand years after the latest texts to be included in Lewis and Short, it also developed usages that require the consultation of other dictionaries. It should be noted that these more specialised works described below are all predicated on the assumption that their users will also have access to a standard Latin dictionary (not necessarily Lewis and Short, and mostly, because of their date and *TLL*'s incompleteness, not *TLL* either) and in general their aim is not to duplicate what such a dictionary provides, but to supplement it. You will therefore often need to consult both Lewis and Short and/or *TLL*, and one of the works listed below. There will also, however, frequently be terms that are simply absent in both Lewis and Short and *TLL*.

§10 The best general dictionary for Medieval Latin is J F Niermeyer and C van de Kieft (eds), *Mediae Latinitatis lexicon minus*, revised by J W J Burgers, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2002), normally referred to simply as Niermeyer. This should be your first port of call after Lewis and Short (§8). The revised edition includes not just the large range of citations from texts pertaining to legal and economic history of the original edition, but also a large number of literary, theological, and philosophical texts. Definitions are given in English, French, and German; the temporal range is c.500–c.1200. It provides plenty of examples in almost every definition, and the editors take pains to try and list the first attested use of a word in any particular sense (though this must be taken only as a rough guide and not absolute fact). Niermeyer is not available in the two main online repositories of dictionaries (§15), but you can access it on campus through the [Brill dictionaries online site](#) (for off-campus access, choose the institutional login and use your UTORid), and a copy is available for CMS students at the Great Hall, and Niermeyer is also available of course at PIMS, Robarts, and some other libraries.

§11 The most comprehensive single dictionary for medieval and humanist Latin is Du Cange, or more properly Charles du Fresne, sieur du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis*. Initially published in three volumes by du Cange in 1678, it was revised and augmented successively by the Maurists (1733–36), Pierre Carpentier (1766), Louis Henschel (1840–50), and finally by Léopold Favre, printed in ten volumes between 1883 and 1887. Known nevertheless as Du Cange, even though his actual contribution is far exceeded by those of later editors, this reference work has a number of idiosyncrasies that sometimes scare people away, not least the fact that its definitions are in Latin and its citations can often not be traced or verified, or only with considerable difficulty. Despite the fact that—like, for example, most of the texts in *Patrologia Latina*—it must be used with care and some scepticism, it is still of benefit to consult Du Cange: it has a lot more words than Niermeyer (§10) or indeed most other dictionaries. It is important to note, though, that this is properly speaking a glossary, and not a dictionary. It does not provide grammatical information, and its definitions are often more in the nature of a (very brief) explanation of the use of a term in a specific context. Du Cange provides citations, but not very many, and is not at all systematic in how these are chosen and employed. It also, very usefully, provides a very large range of variant spellings, which may or (quite often) may not be recorded in Niermeyer. While it is reasonable to expect that if dealing with ecclesiastical or philosophical or literary material, Niermeyer and the other dictionaries of *DLD* (§15) will suffice, for anything else, particularly legal and administrative texts, you will often

find Du Cange necessary. This is why it is a blessing that it is included in both *DLD* and *Logeion*. You may also consult it online in a [standalone interface maintained by the Sorbonne](#) which is, like *Logeion*, free to use without need to log in.

§12 The basic toolkit is therefore, in this order: Lewis and Short (§8), Niermeyer (§10), and Du Cange (§12). The more specialised works can be arranged into three categories by where they draw their boundaries: the region, period, or topic covered. Of the regional dictionaries, the most recent and complete one is the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* or *DMLBS*, which includes often extensive citations dated according to the most recent scholarly knowledge. It is also the most convenient to use, being included in both *DLD* and *Logeion* (§15). Note, however, that it really is a dictionary for the region it represents, and while in many instances its definitions will be helpful for other regions, do not assume that this will always be the case; if consulting *DMLBS* for non-British sources always make sure you also consult Niermeyer and/or any available regional dictionary for the region in question.

a. Another useful regional lexical tool is E Habel and F Gröbel's *Mittelateinisches Glossar*, 2nd edn (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1989). Lacking citations and grammatical information, its main value is its portability; it cannot be compared to any of the larger regional works.

b. The very opposite of portability is presented by Eduard Brinckmeier, *Glossarium diplomaticum*, 2 vols (Gotha, 1856–63; reprinted 1967; also available online to download). Providing definitions for Latin and vernacular terms used in charters and other administrative documents in the German lands as well as some other northern parts of the empire, it is extremely useful for a rather large chunk of Europe. It is not, however, by any means comprehensive and not an equivalent for the German lands of the *DMLBS*. (A very large pdf may be found somewhere online for consultation or downloading.)

c. Another regional dictionary, once again not entirely complete or unproblematic, is the *Latinatis Italicae medii aevi Lexicon (saec. V ex.–saec. XI in)*, initiated by Francesco Araldi and revised and added to by Pasquale Smiraglia (Florence: SISMEL, 2001). This is also encompassed in *DLD*.

d. Unfortunately most other regional dictionary projects are outdated or incomplete; you will need to consult with scholars and in reference works pertinent to the region that interests you to find out what is most useful, and what has been finally completed or updated.

§13 The thematic dictionaries that will probably be of most use to most people consulting the present guide are those concerned with theological and philosophical Latin. Of these the most important are Albert Blaise, *Lexicon Latinatis medii aevi praesertim ad res ecclesiasticas pertinens* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), and Albert Sleumer and Josef Schmidt, *Kirchenlateinisches Wörterbuch*, 2nd edn (current imprint: Hildesheim, G. Olms, 1996; orig. 1926), both of which are in *DLD* (§15), and both of which provide citations and examples. Blaise's definitions are in French, Sleumer's in German. More concise but still useful, with definitions in English, is Leo Stelton, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), also encompassed within *DLD* (§15).

a. Not a thematic dictionary, or indeed even a dictionary at all, but still very much worth knowing about is J G Th Graesse, *Orbis Latinus: Lexikon lateinischer geographischer Namen des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, 3 vols, revised and edited by Helmut Plechl with Sophie-Charlotte Plechl (Braunschweig: Klinckschardt & Biermann, 1972 [orig. 1861]). This provides modern (German) equivalents of Latin place names, many of which won't be found in any of the dictionaries listed elsewhere in this document, including names of bodies of water and monasteries. It is available in an easily consultable [digital version online](#) maintained by Columbia University which, however, is a digitisation of the much less full 1909 edition. All three volumes of the 1972 revision are available as page scans of three separate volumes (searchable, but only per volume, not of the whole thing)

on [bavarikon](#), one of the many reasons medievalists have to be grateful for Bavaria's wealth and how it is put to use.

§14 In terms of dictionaries specialising in a specific period of Latin (which also frequently means a particular type of Latin), for Late Latin (up to AD600), Alexander Souter's *Glossary of Later Latin to 600 AD* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949) is very handy, though without examples but with citations to texts. Also very useful and covering much the same material (much of the Latin in this period was indeed Christian) is Albert Blaise, rev. Henri Chirat, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1967), which does include examples. Both are included in *DLD* (§15). Finally, the works of the late J N Adams (§22, §24) should not be neglected by students of late antique and early medieval Latin (as well as of classical Latin): a project to index all the words discussed by him across his prolific output is [now available in preliminary form](#).

§15 Many of the dictionaries above are available in online repositories of Latin lexical tools. The two most important of these repositories are [Logeion](#) and the [Database of Latin Dictionaries \(DLD\)](#). Both include Lewis and Short (§8), Souter's *Glossary of Later Latin to AD600* (§14), *Du Cange* (§11), the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources (DMLBS)* (§12), and Gaffiot's French dictionary. The *DLD* is particularly useful for encompassing a range of works specific to ecclesiastical and philosophical Latin, not covered in as much detail in *Niermeyer* (§10). On the other hand, for administrative, legal, and economic history outside Britain, the *DLD* is of little benefit, significantly less useful than *Niermeyer* is for ecclesiastical Latin. The *DLD* also includes a number of regional dictionaries, of which the only ones that can be called truly complete are *DMLBS* and the *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis regni Hungariae*. It also includes three medieval French Latin dictionaries, and one medieval Spanish Latin dictionary.

a. While containing fewer dictionaries than *DLD*, [Logeion](#) does encompass the main general ones as well as one regional dictionary (*DMLBS*), and is easier to consult; it is also freely available and does not require users to log in or be on campus.

§16 For the other end of the period, [Brill's Dictionary of Renaissance Latin from Prose Sources Online](#) covers over 200 authors from c.1300 to c.1600, and is an invaluable resource for Renaissance / humanist Latin.

§17 Somewhat more cumbersome but also encompassing far more is the misleadingly named *Neulateinische Wortliste* compiled by Johann Ramming of the *TLL* (§8.a) and generally known as [Ramming](#). This has over 20,000 lemmata with examples from over 3,000 authors, from Petrarch to c.1700. Definitions are very brief and in German; but lots of examples are cited, which is helpful; references are also given, where possible, to other lexical tools consulted in compiling this work. Unlike the Brill dictionary (§16), *Ramming* is freely available online.

Part I.c other lexical tools

§18 The works listed above will be sufficient for most purposes, but do not, obviously, encompass everything you might need, depending on your area of research specialisation, or what subjects you might need to consult outside that area. More niche glossaries and dictionaries are not listed here; they can be found by consulting the relevant reference works on Medieval Latin. The most important (albeit in some respects now outdated) reference guide for Medieval Latin language and

literature is F A C Mantello and A G Rigg (eds), *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996; hereafter Mantello/Rigg). Other aspects of this work will be introduced below; here, note that in addition to one chapter (BB) listing over 80 specialised lexical tools (e.g. ‘The Latin Vocabulary of Illicit Sex’; *Die lateinischen Schimpfwörter*; *Juristenlatein*; *Parish Register Latin*; *Index de la pharmacopée latine*; and the *Glossarium eroticum linguae latinae*), and including further specialised lists of further lexical tools and journals that publish material on Latin lexicography, this book also contains a chapter (CD) on Medieval Latin vocabulary, word formation, and lexicography (not just modern) that also lists even more dictionaries; and 38 chapters on varieties of Medieval Latin that are not, strictly speaking, literary (e.g. canon law, music, commerce, zoology, weapons and warfare, agriculture, etc.) many of which provide reference to the very specialised lexical tools for these fields.

It is often advisable to consult the relevant chapter(s) of Mantello/Rigg when you are confronted by a text in one of the areas covered before working your way through all the dictionaries listed above; but you should in any case check in these various chapters when the dictionaries listed in I(b) have failed to provide assistance, or give you definitions that seem suspect. Do not reinvent the wheel, and do not a priori trust a general dictionary if a specialised one is available. But be aware of the precise scope and intentions of whatever work you do consult, because it is not always the case that the more specialised reference work will help you more than the more general one.

§19 The most comprehensive guide to Medieval Latin is provided, in five volumes, by Peter Stotz, *Handbuch zur lateinischen Sprache des Mittelalters* (Munich: Beck, 1996–2004), of which the first two volumes provide a wealth of detail on lexicography, semantic shifts, loanwords and loan meanings and word formation. The first volume gives a brisk (c.170pp.) history of the Latin language in the middle ages, covering inter alia the development of Christian and Vulgar Latin, regional variation, spoken Latin, the relationship of Romance and Latin, and other topics. This is followed by over 120 pages on Medieval Latin lexicography, covering a wide range of pre-modern and modern works and a detailed discussion of modern lexicographical practice that covers such topics as lemmatisation and the use of asterisks. The last c.300 pages present first a section on different semantic fields (e.g. plants, animals, the human body, colours, clothing, etc.), in each case beginning with a long survey of research tools, followed by examples of words and their usage; and finally, the volume is rounded off with a consideration of the importance of Greek for Medieval Latin. The second volume has two parts. The first is dedicated to semantic shifts in Medieval Latin, considering inter alia the influence of Christianity on the meanings of words, shifts caused by the influence of other languages, and various specific kinds of changes in meaning in the categories of metonymy, synecdoche, and metaphor. The second part is on word formation, examining in detail the ways in which other languages influenced the formation of new words, and then going through various types of word formations including, for example, specific suffixes for nouns and adjectives, compound words, and the separation of elements to form new words.

There can be no question that Stotz is the indispensable handbook and reference tool for those wishing to understand the vocabulary of Medieval Latin in a fundamental way. It is unlikely that anyone not specialising in Medieval Latin philology in a narrow (that is to say language-focussed) sense would ever want to read through the whole thing. But these volumes are nevertheless often likely to be useful if one wants to understand why certain words ended up behaving the way they do. (The other volumes of Stotz are discussed further below.) Given that Medieval Latin in the wild is not fully encompassed by any dictionary and its words can often do things that are therefore surprising, understanding how the vocabulary developed can be helpful

when dictionaries still leave one puzzled, and especially so in the case of projects needing careful attention to words and word choice, such as editions or commentaries.

§20 Finally, it is important to remember that editions of texts—in particular texts that present lexical difficulties, often because of the influence of vernaculars—frequently contain glosses. You will find these in some MGH editions, for example, and particularly in editions of legal and administrative texts of various kinds (particularly charters, estate surveys, accounts). It is obviously important that you make sure to consult the gloss provided by the editor of your text, if there is such a gloss. But also consider how that gloss might be useful for other texts: if you're working on unpublished thirteenth-century charters from southern Germany, or a legal tract from tenth-century northern Italy, editions of other charters from thirteenth-century southern Germany, or charters or other legal documents from tenth-century Italy that do have glosses will frequently be useful, and especially where latinised vernacular forms are found, they might provide help where all other lexica fail to do so.

Part II Guides to the Medieval Latin language

§21 With a whole volume on Medieval Latin phonology, and over 200 pages on Medieval Latin morphology, it is unlikely that there will be any competition in terms of comprehensiveness to volumes 3 and 4 of Stotz (§19). Phonology gets its own volume of over 300 pages (volume 3); and volume 4 covers morphology, syntax, and style. NB: style here is really not discussed in terms of literary styles of various periods and authors, but rather at the more basic levels of, for example, the uses of ellipsis, conjunctions, periphrasis, and so on. Matters such as *cursus* and rhyme are covered much more cursorily.

a. Latin style is a matter that straddles the study of both the language and the literature, and in general terms it is discussed by the reference works on literature referred to below in Part III. See, however, also the relevant sections on the evolution of Latin prose and verse style in Bourgain (§23), and in Mantello/Rigg (§18, chapters CE on metrics and CF on prose styles and *cursus*), which provide brief introductions; as well as J B Hofmann and A Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stylistik* (Munich: Beck, 1965), the second volume of their *Lateinische Grammatik*. An Italian translation overseen by A Traina contains an appendix with recent bibliography on style (primarily focusing on the classical period): *Stilistica latina* (Bologna: Pàtron, 2002).

b. More discursive treatment is provided in the two chapters on 'Prose Style' and 'Verse Style' in Hexter/Townsend (§30) and at greater length though focussed on specific authors, the essays on the medieval period in J N Adams and R G Meyer (eds), *Aspects of the Language of Latin Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) (which only dips briefly into post-Classical Latin), and Tobias Reinhardt, Michael Lapidge, and J N Adams (eds), *Aspects of the Language of Latin Prose* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

c. For prose style in general, the most significant single work is Michael Winterbottom, *Style and Scholarship: Latin Prose from Gildas to Raffaele Regio* (Florence: SISMEL, 2002).

d. Verse style lacks a similarly accessible volume; the works of Raby (§33) are a good guide, and from a more technical standpoint the standard works are Edmond Faral, *Les arts poétique du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1924), and Dag Norberg, *Introduction à l'étude de la versification latine médiévale* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1958); or, more recently, briefly, and in German rather than French, Paul Klopsch, *Einführung in die mitellateinische Verslehre* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972); *idem*, *Einführung in die Dichtungslehren des lateinischen Mittelalters* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980).

§22 Also useful in understanding the development of Medieval Latin, though more discursive and not really reference works, are a number of books by J N Adams: *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); *The Regional Diversification of Latin 200BC–AD600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); *Social Variation and the Latin Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and in addition, Roger Wright, *A Sociophilological Study of late Latin* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002). While all these works are chronologically limited in scope to the very early period, given the importance of that period in the development of Medieval Latin, they are nevertheless worth consulting if you wish to enter into the history of the language in any depth.

§23 By far the best single-volume guide to the language, which provides a brief history of Medieval Latin and a discussion of its salient characteristics, and then—its most valuable feature that differentiates it from the other guides—an extensive anthology of texts, with French translations and lengthy linguistic commentaries, is Pascale Bourgain, with Marie-Clotilde Hubert, *Le Latin Médiéval* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005). All medievalists should have a copy; one is available for consultation by CMS students in the Great Hall. The anthology of texts covers all periods, genres, styles, and unlike other anthologies, includes a large range of administrative texts. The first part provides an excellent if brief linguistic history from late antiquity to humanism, including topics ranging from phonology and morphology to the varying changes occurring in Romance-speaking and other regions. The second part provides a detailed account of the language, covering the influences on it of the different contexts of its use, morphology, syntax, word formation and semantics, pronunciation, and orthography, as well as lists of modern dictionaries. The third section of the third part, which is a heavily annotated anthology of texts, discusses the evolution of various kinds of Medieval Latin style in prose and verse, including useful discussions of developments such as *cursus*, rhymed prose, and metrical and rhymed verse, with plenty of examples. More than just a reference work, this is an excellent companion to Medieval Latin to which you can turn for both advice on matters linguistic, and practice with reading a vast variety of Medieval Latin texts.

§24 On the evolution of the Latin language up to the early medieval period, the works of Adams (§22) are indispensable, not just for lexical development, but for other aspects of the language too. In addition, his *Anthology of Informal Latin 200BC–AD900: Fifty Texts with Translations and Linguistic Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) provides a useful supplement to Bourgain (§23) for the earlier period, covering texts that provide a glimpse of Latin in its more pragmatic uses, the forms in which it is quite possible more people encountered it than in the literary or even formal administrative texts that most of us tend to work with.

§25 For a guide to all aspects of the language that is, unlike Stotz (§19), actually readable in full and easy to use, and is discursive and not based on examples provided (as is Bourgain, §23), and is also in English, Mantello/Rigg (§18) is your first port of call. Part Two provides brief overviews of the major issues, ranging from orthography and syntax to style and humanistic Latin; and Part Three surveys various both forms of more or less pragmatic Latinity with a view to the linguistic idiosyncrasies of, for example, the liturgy, the language of secular administration or commerce or the mechanical arts or the sciences, and also the idiosyncrasies of biblical and Christian Latin, with a focus on late antiquity. There are also sections on Latin in everyday life, and on Medieval Latin grammarians. Mantello/Rigg is, however, very much what it says it is in the title, namely an introduction and bibliographical guide; it is not a companion to the language in the way that Bourgain can be, nor a profound examination of it as Stotz is.

§26 In addition to Part Two of Mantello/Rigg (§18; §25), a useful introduction to the idiosyncrasies of Medieval Latin orthography and grammar is provided in Alison Goddard Elliott, ‘A Brief Introduction to Medieval Latin Grammar’, in *Medieval Latin*, ed. by K. P. Harrington, 2nd edition revised by Joseph Pucci (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 1-51.

§27 Somewhere in between the pertinent sections of Mantello/Rigg (§18; §25) and Goddard Elliott (§26) are the introductions to Medieval Latin by Albert Blaise and Karl Strecker, of which I cite here only the English translations: Albert Blaise, *A Handbook of Christian Latin: Style, Morphology, and Syntax*, trans. G C Roti (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992); Karl Strecker, *Introduction to Medieval Latin*, trans. R B Palmer (Berlin: Weidmann, 1957). Blaise’s title provides an indication of the scope; Strecker provides more discussion of literary style and materials as well. Greti Dinkova-Bruun’s [‘Medieval Latin’](#), in James Clackson (ed.), *A Companion to the Latin Language* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), pp. 284–302, provides a very succinct overview of the characteristics and history of the language; Dag Norberg’s *Manuel pratique de latin médiéval* (Paris: Picard, 1968) does a somewhat less brief job of the same thing. A recent guide to reference tools, but far less discursive than Mantello/Rigg (§18) is the entry on [Medieval Latin in Oxford Bibliographies Online](#) by Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann and Dario Binotto, updated in April 2023.

Part III Reference works for Medieval Latin literature

§28 Bourgain’s handbook (§23) is not intended to be a literary history, but because of the comprehensiveness of the anthology of texts that form its third part and the meticulousness of the commentary, it does a pretty good job of serving as a history of Latin literature in this period, with literature very broadly defined. There are sections to illustrate the history of Latin in this period, focussing on specific idiosyncrasies and characteristics: the first part of the anthology contains twenty-five texts from the fourth to the fifteenth century chosen to illustrate particular aspects of linguistic development, encompassing both literary and administrative materials; the second part includes sections on administrative, technical, scholastic, professional (law, medicine, and politics), and didactic Latin, as well as sections on various kinds of narratives aiming for a relatively plain style, including Classicising texts from Bede to Petrarch; and the last part of the anthology contains texts aiming for an elevated, ornate, or formal style, ranging from imperial and papal charters through rhymed prose, hermeneutic style, and rhythmic and metrical poetry. Very thoughtfully and clearly conceived, it provides an outstanding overview of a vast variety of Latinity in over a hundred text excerpts, and is infinitely better in every respect than the standard anthology used in North America, that of Harrington and Pucci (§26), and is also better than the useful reader of Keith Sidwell, *Reading Medieval Latin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). It provides a more reliable and thorough guide to language and style and change over time than either of those, has a more inclusive approach to literature, and unlike the other readers covers both non-literary (administrative and legal) texts, and a larger period: both Harrington and Pucci, and Sidwell, stop c.1200.

§29 Without examples, but more detailed and comprehensive than Bourgain (§23) while nevertheless retaining the character of a reference work to be dipped into easily, Mantello/Rigg (§18) provides 27 chapters on various genres and forms of Medieval Latin literature, from beast epic through hymns, biography, pastoralia, etc., to anthologies and florilegia and translations from other languages. Written by leading experts in each field, these chapters are not intended to provide literary criticism or interpretation, but rather brief overviews of the principal characteristics of the respective genres, outlines of their development over the period, the titles of the principal

representatives of each genre, and good bibliographic tools for further research. If what you need is an introductory overview rather than a narrative history, this is the place to start, though the literary histories—the development and changes over time within the genres—are not covered in equal depth in all the chapters.

§30 It is instructive to compare the latter sections of Mantello/Rigg (§29) with Ralph Hexter and David Townsend (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Latin Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). The titles themselves reveal much: while the older work is an ‘introduction’, the newer one is a ‘handbook’. Mantello/Rigg does not aim to provide much in the way of originality of scholarship, and its delineations of rubrics within which to divide up the vast range of Medieval Latin literature are, close to thirty years on, somewhat old-fashioned in appearance, representing traditional and not necessarily uncontroversial genre definitions (though by no means always accepting unquestioningly). The *Oxford Handbook* is less introductory, and aims to represent the state of the field, while also providing guidance for those wishing to go further; and its rubrics represent an attempt to place Medieval Latin literature firmly within the discourses of cognate fields of medieval studies and literary studies. For example, chapters discussing many topics treated cursorily or not at all in Mantello/Rigg include those on canonicity, Latin as a language of authority, gender, and sex and sexuality. Medieval Latin literature is, in other words, viewed through the perspective of various themes of current interest within medieval studies and the humanities more broadly, rather than through the lens of conventional generic boundaries, and authors present definite opinions rather than trying primarily to provide brief overviews of the sources and scholarship regarding particular genres. The two books should be understood as complementing each other, rather than one being replaced by the other.

§31 For the more conventional approach of a narrative history of Medieval Latin literature (with a rather narrower view of how to define literature) that is relatively recent, Claudio Leonardi (ed.), *Letteratura Latina Medievale (Secoli VI–XV)* (Florence: Sismel, 2002) is generally excellent. There are ten chapters, each covering a century. The chapters up to the eleventh century follow a mainly straightforward, chronological structure, surveying the principal authors and texts of the period in succession, discussing matters of style, language, influence, and also more briefly biography and patronage where there is information on these issues. The chapters for the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries take a different approach, less author- or text-based, with more discursive treatment of the development of various genres and styles, and from the fourteenth century onwards the focus shifts rather heavily toward texts from Italy. Like the *Oxford Handbook* (§30) and unlike Mantello/Rigg (§29), Leonardi is more discursive and less introductory and survey-like in style and content; but it is also more conventional in its choice of themes and approach to literary history.

§32 The four previous paragraphs have described relatively recent, single-volume works that are in one way or another extremely useful, but not necessarily greatly detailed. For really thorough histories of Medieval Latin literature (which do not, however, cover the whole period), the old stalwarts by Raby, Manitius, and Brunhölzl are yet to be dislodged from their prominent places on shelves and readings lists of those serious about the subject.

§33 F J E Raby’s *A History of Secular Latin Poetry in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), along with his *A History of Christian Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the Close of the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953) remain indispensable guides to Medieval Latin poetry. Raby follows a roughly chronological structure, beginning with a brief outline of Classical Latin and Greek rhetoric in the first volume on secular poetry and with the earliest Christian verse in the

volume on Christian poetry, and then going over the medieval period by different regions (only until the end of the twelfth century for secular poetry). Old-fashioned in approach, it is nevertheless a very useful entry point into understanding the trajectory of poetry in this period, with good discussions of the main intellectual currents and social developments influencing the poetry, and (albeit perhaps somewhat outdated) basic interpretations of some of the highlights of Medieval Latin poetry. While you are unlikely to want to cite Raby as your main point of reference for the interpretation of any individual poem, you are likely to need Raby as a guide and background reference for whichever period you work on until c.1200, and later for specifically religious verse, and Raby will provide a good orientation as you start to research a particular period or author. Note that 'secular' poetry includes almost solely poetry by clerics, and it is even debatable if all of it is necessarily to be understood as secular simply because it is not explicitly religious; the titles are an unfortunate relic of a modern tendency to divide up these spheres of the human spirit neatly that is alien to the medieval period. Both works should be consulted together, since the logic behind the division of material between them is not necessarily always intuitive.

§34 The comprehensive literary history of Medieval Latin remains the venerable Manitius: Max Manitius, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 3 vols (Munich: Beck, 1911–31). The first volume of over 700 pages (excluding the index) goes from the fifth to the middle of the tenth century, with the first part covering 'Roman' literature from Justinian to Charlemagne in 40 chapters divided into sections on writers with a broad range ('universale Schriftsteller'), namely Boethius, Cassiodorus, Isidore of Seville, and Bede; theology; philosophy and science; philology and grammar; poetry; and history and geography. The second part covers 'Carolingian humanism and its decline' in 85 chapters divided into roughly the same categories as those of part 1. Note that there is overlap between these categories: included in poetry are, for example, a number of historical poems that are not encompassed within the chapters on historical writing, and Peter of Pisa's poetry is in the section on philology and grammar. Secular biography and hagiography are included under history. Each chapter provides some background context on the author and witnesses to the author's life as well as basic information regarding manuscript witnesses to the texts, and modern editions. These bits of information are, needless to say, now often of dubious value, given the movement of manuscript holdings and the publication of many new editions. Each chapter summarises the works that are its subject and discusses the particularities of the author's style and approach to the genre or subject, their literary context and influences on them, as well as to some extent their later impact. The volume closes with a useful but outdated chronological table.

Volume 2 proceeds in a similar fashion as volume 1 (with now a little over 800 pages, containing corrections and addenda to volume 1 as well), though the thematic rubrics are now slightly different. This volume covers the period from the middle of the tenth to the middle of the eleventh century in 136 chapters with sections on theology; historiography (secular and ecclesiastical, including biography); prose hagiography; poetry; the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, logic); and the *quadrivium* (music, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy). Volume 3 (produced with the assistance of Paul Lehmann) takes us, in around 1100 pages, from the Investiture Conflict to c.1200. Theology and philosophy are now divided into two parts, the first on the ecclesiastical literature pertaining to the Investiture Conflict and the second on theology and philosophy in the more conventional sense. The second section provides five chapters on, respectively, the *trivium*; the *quadrivium*; scholia and anthologies; novels, archaeology, memorabilia, and political theory; epistolography; and histories of literature. Part three covers historical writing of various kinds, ranging from chronicles and annals to regional and 'national' or 'ethnic' histories, histories of the Crusades, dynastic histories, histories of the Church and of dioceses and cities, monastic histories, and biographies and hagiographies. The final section on poetry covers historical poetry; didactical poetry (including adaptations of Classical

works, fables, and allegories); biblical and hagiographical poetry; occasional poems; elegy, and satire; debate; secular and religious lyric; and secular and religious drama.

It is unfortunate that Manitius's work is so old; the description above will already be revealing as to the extent to which it diverges in many respects from modern scholarly attitudes; and the attributions of texts to authors as well as dates would now in some cases be considered wrong, or at least doubtful. I say this is unfortunate, because the comprehensiveness and depth of knowledge displayed here is, despite the date, still invaluable. The indices remain essential for information on medieval Latin authors' imitation and quotation of their predecessors.

a. Biography and hagiography, while covered quite thoroughly in Manitius (with the exception of the Merovingian period) are fortunately surveyed much more recently in the even more monumental *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter* by Walter Berschin, 4 vols in 5 parts (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1986–2004). For these genres, Berschin is definitely a preferable guide.

§35 A less systematic approach, intending to provide less a survey of individual works than a broad overview of the 'development, character, and significance' of a literature that the author sees as quintessentially European and a more clear and multifaceted representation of the spirit of the medieval west in this period than any other literature, is provided in Franz Brunhölzl, *Geschichte der lateinische Literatur des Mittelalters* (Munich: Fink, 1975–1992). Projected to cover a thousand years, this work was never completed, and only got as far as the twelfth century. Since Brunhölzl sees Medieval Latin literature as the principal witness of western intellectual life in the middle ages, he does not organise his work by genre, but rather by period and region, allocating works to chapters depending more on their place within his scheme of intellectual and cultural history rather than genre. A very different approach from that of Manitius or Raby, and in its own way equally problematic, Brunhölzl's effort is nevertheless a worthy attempt at a synthesis that repays careful engagement, not only for those interested in Latin literature narrowly defined.

§36 While the works named in the previous paragraphs generally do include some discussion of Latin literature of at least the sixth, and in many cases also the fifth century and sometimes a bit of the fourth, the literature of late antiquity is not, properly speaking, their subject. Chapters in Mantello/Rigg (§18) by Daniel Sheerin on Christian Latin (DA), Michael Roberts on late antiquity (GB), Walter Berschin on biography (GK), and David Townsend on hagiography provide good introductions; and the first two volumes Berschin's massive study on biography (§34.a) go from the third to the end of the seventh century. Introductory essays on various topics of late antique literature (not, however, restricted to Latin) are in Scott McGill and Edward J Watts (eds), [*Companion to Late Antique Literature*](#) (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018); and in Part II of Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (ed.), [*The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*](#) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). A good monographic survey is *Profilo storico della letteratura tardolatina* (Pavia: Pavia University Press, 2013), which covers the third to the seventh centuries. The comprehensive handbook on Classical Latin literature comprising eight volumes in ten parts (and in German) is as yet incomplete, but two volumes in three parts covering late antiquity up to 430 have been published: Reinhart Herzog (ed.), *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*, vol. 5: *Restauration und Erneuerung 284–374 n. Chr.* (Munich: Beck, 1989), and Jean-Denis Berger, Jacques Fontaine, and Peter Lebrecht Schmidt (eds), *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*, vol. 6: *Die Literatur im Zeitalter des Theodosius (374–430 n. Chr.)* (Munich: Beck, 2020). Of the latter, the first part (c.700 pages) covers secular poetry and literary prose as well as prose on various technical subjects, from law through agriculture to rhetoric; the second part (c.1000 pages) covers Christian prose.

§37 At the other end of the period, things get even more patchy: most surveys and anthologies of Medieval Latin literature tend to include at least some of the early Christian writers, but many do not go beyond the thirteenth century. Raby's two volumes on secular poetry (§33) and Manitius (§34) intentionally stop at the turn of the thirteenth century; Brunhölzl (§35) intended to continue but did not (though he lived and published for another two decades). The two standard English readers for Medieval Latin (§28) also stop c.1200, as indeed do many other works covering the literary history of Medieval Latin. Medievalists in fields that are not Latin literature might find it slightly puzzling to find so many instances where there appears to be a caesura at some point between 1200 and 1300, since in general, no other field within (European) medieval studies locates the end of the middle ages in that century, at least not to my knowledge. The reason—in my view, and I am not by any means a specialist in Medieval Latin literature—has more to do with disciplinary turf wars than anything else. Classicists have mostly been happy to leave 'late' or 'later' or 'vulgar' Latin to medievalists as a degenerate language with little of any interest. (There are, of course exceptions; many of the authors of the works listed above (§36) would generally identify as Classicists, and have been employed by Classics departments.) The thirteenth century is the beginning of the so-called Renaissance, and one of the things that is supposedly reborn (and this is proclaimed quite self-consciously by many of the writers of this period) is 'good' Latin. Thus the field of Neo-Latin begins normally with Petrarch and the early fourteenth century, and goes on till the present.

For medievalists, this seems a little absurd, since however much the Latin of the humanists might differ from that of their medieval predecessors, their intellectual and spiritual frames of reference were in fact far less different than they and much later scholarship has often asserted. If Renaissance / humanist Latin was more like Classical Latin than that produced in the twelfth century, both the earlier and later periods were just as barbaric as the middle ages (from the Renaissance came the genocides of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, which were, let us not forget, thought to be India—hardly such a great leap forward from medieval geographical thinking). In the interests of reclaiming this period from what seems to me an artificial and unhelpful division, I close therefore with reference to the principal guides to Neo-Latin literature, namely Sarah Knight and Stefan Tilg (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Victoria Moul (ed.), *A Guide to Neo-Latin Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Philip Ford, Jan Bloemendal, and Charles Fantazzi (eds), *Brill's Encyclopaedia of the Neo-Latin World*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2014). There is much in these volumes that goes far beyond what many might be comfortable with including under the umbrella of 'medieval'; but there is also much that falls firmly within the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and is as medieval as anything else of those centuries.