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**A Manuscript (Un)finished**

# Introduction

Like most historical research, the study of a manuscript usually provides us with more questions than answers. Palaeographic analysis can tell us much about when a book was produced, or where it was made, but conclusions will remain imprecise, and even though we have a rough idea of how handwritten books were made, many questions about medieval book production remain unanswered. When we only have the finished end result to look at, there is a limit to what we can find out about how various craftsmen collaborated in the production of the manuscript, how they communicated, or in which order they applied their skills to the parchment folios.

At first sight, unfinished manuscripts may seem to be even more mysterious than those that have been finished, and seem to leave even more questions unanswered, but because they have been left in the middle of their production process, they give us a rare insight into such aspects of book production, and they are able to answer certain questions that completed manuscripts cannot. This article is a discussion of how the unfinished nature of such books can tell us more, illustrated by a case study of Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français 12786, hereafter referred to as Fr. 12786.

According to palaeographic analysis, Fr. 12786 was made in the early fourteenth century in Northern France.[[1]](#footnote-1) There is, however, no internal evidence to support this dating or localisation, though it is possible that further philological and linguistic research into the manuscript’s contents might help to bring additional insights into where and when Fr. 12786 was made.[[2]](#footnote-2)

As it currently stands, there are eleven texts in Fr. 12786, as well as a collection of forty‑one love songs, shown in Table 1. All texts are written in the vernacular, Old French, but apart from this they do not immediately seem to have much in common, as there is considerable variety of styles, themes, and lengths. Some of the texts are very well‑known and widely transmitted, such as the *Roman de la Rose* (f. 43r‑75v) and the *Bestiaire d’Amours* (f. 31r‑42v), whereas other texts are much more obscure.

The book consists of ninety‑nine folios, divided over three codicological units.[[3]](#footnote-3) The codicological breaks are found after the fourth and after the tenth quire, from both of which folios have been taken out, possibly to ensure that the texts would finish at the end of the quires, which is the current situation.[[4]](#footnote-4) Both instances, however, are somewhat mysterious. The fourth quire, of which the final two folios have been removed, contains *Le Livre des Pierres*, a prose lapidary, but this text is incomplete; the final sentence in the manuscript breaks off in the middle, and the ending of the text is missing. The lapidary may originally have been complete and the folios may have been removed with text and all, but there is also the possibility that the folios were already removed, in which case the scribe must have found that the text was too long, and the miscalculation now results in an unfinished text. There is, however, no evidence in the script, such as an attempt at compression, that suggests that the scribe found himself in lack of enough space. We could also consider that there was originally another quire, or the intention of another quire, that would have contained the remainder of the lapidary.

Folios four, five, and six out of eight have been removed in the tenth quire, ensuring that the *Roman de la Rose* ends on the final folio of this quire, the point of the second codicological break, and because the *Rose* is a continuous text in the manuscript without any gaps or missing passages in the middle, we know that the folios were taken out before the text was written down. Interestingly, the *Rose*, like the lapidary, is incomplete. Of the nearly three‑hundred sources in which the romance survives, Fr. 12786 is the only one in which the continuation by Jean de Meun is not included.[[5]](#footnote-5) There is an anonymous continuation following the text by Guillaume de Lorris, which is found in six other manu‑ scripts, but even this continuation is unfinished. The hypothesis of a missing quire does not apply here; the scribe left almost all of f. 75 blank, possibly with the intention to finish the text at a later stage.

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| --- | --- |
| First codicological unit: | *Le Roman de la Poire* (Messire Thibaut) |
| f. 1r‑24v |
| f. 24v‑30v | *Le Livre de Pierres* (anonymous) |
| Second codicological unit: | *Li Bestiaire d’Amours* (Richard de Fournival) |
| f. 31r‑42v |
| f. 42v | *Son Poitevin* (anonymous) |
| f. 43r‑75rf. 75v | *Le Roman de la Rose* (Guillaume de Lorris; anonymous) (blank) |
| Third codicological unit: | Polyphonic rondeaux (Adam de la Halle; anonymous) |
| f. 76r‑82r |
| f. 82v‑83r | *Les Prophecies que Ezechiel li Prophetes fist* (anonymous) |
| f. 83r‑84v | *Explication des Songes* (anonymous) |
| f. 84v‑87v | *L’Ordre d’Amors* (Nichole) |
| f. 87v‑90v | *La Trinitiez Nostre Dame* (anonymous) |
| f. 90v‑92r | *Les ix Joies Nostre Dame* (Rutebeuf ) |
| f. 92r‑92v | *Le Dit d’Aristote* (Rutebeuf ) |
| f. 92v‑98v | *Le Lunaire de Salomon* (anonymous) |

Table 1: Contents of Fr. 12786

Because the codicological breaks are so clear, in texts as well as in the manuscript’s collation, the three codicological units may originally have been bound, or intended to be bound, in a different order from that in which they are presently arranged.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The current binding probably dates from the nineteenth century and it is unknown how many previous rebindings there have been. One could imagine that the order of the units, and therefore the order of the texts, influences the intertextual relations in the book, but in fact the order in which the texts appear in the manuscript may not have made a significant difference to the medieval reader; the current view of reading practices in the Middle Ages suggests that books were not read from cover to cover, but rather were opened in the middle, and some texts were read more often than others, regardless of their position in the manuscript.

However, we do have to consider the possibility that there were originally more than three codicological units and, thus, that there were texts that used to be, or were intended to be, part of the manuscript, but now no longer are. This would indubitably have a significant influence on the inter- and intratextual relations among the manuscript’s contents. There is also a chance that the three units were meant to be two or three separate books, or parts of books, and there are reasons to believe that this may have been the case, some of which will be discussed later. However, the appearance of a single and very consistent hand throughout the manuscript, as well as consistency in the shapes and sizes of the columns, and the consistent amount of lines in each column, might suggest otherwise.

The combination of *chansons*, romances (such as the *Roman de la Rose* and the *Roman de la* *Poire*),texts of a more scientific or practical nature (such as *L’Explication des Songes*, which is a dream treatise, *Les Prophecies que Ezechiel le Prophete fist*, which is analmanac, and the lapidary), and texts that are more religious or spiritual in content, is relatively uncommon at that time and in that region, and it is precisely this miscellaneous nature that suggests that the manuscript was made according to an individual’s personal taste. This hypothesis is reinforced by the absence of an index; to find a text in the manuscript, someone must have already known which text was copied where. We can easily imagine that someone would want all sorts of texts they would want to read, either for entertainment purposes or for practical implications, efficiently copied and bound together in one volume. Such manuscripts ‘represent defiantly individual impulses – appropriations of works for the use of particular persons in particular situations. In such contexts, the books may have required no explanation, the private quirks behind their manufacture being abundantly clear’.[[7]](#footnote-7) If this hypothesis applies to Fr. 12786, the manuscript is a highly personal testament that can tell us a lot about the life of the intended owner, even if the identity of that owner will remain unknown.

# Filling in the Blanks

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Fr. 12786 is that it has apparently been left unfinished:

there are blank spaces of various shapes and sizes where one would expect miniatures, initials, and music notation. It is evident that there was an intention for them to be filled in, but this never happened, and it is unclear why the book was never finished. Nevertheless, careful consideration of these various kinds of blank spaces can lead to some interesting conclusions.

# Miniatures

All spaces meant for miniatures, one hundred and fourteen in total, are found in the two

texts that make up the middle codicological unit. In this respect, the second unit differs from the

first and the third, and this is one of the reasons to at least consider the possibility that this unit was not meant to be part of the present compilation, but was intended either to be on its own, or to be part of another manuscript. The middle unit is also the only place in the manuscript in which we find rubrication, and indeed the only place where red ink was used at all. The rubrication and the spaces for miniatures are closely related to each other, for each rubric is coupled with a miniature‑to‑be; this feature presents some interesting lines of enquiry concerning the collaboration between various craftsmen to which I will return in the next section of this article. In other sources that transmit the *Bestiaire d’Amours* and the *Roman de la Rose* the rubrics are more or less the same, and even though in the *Rose* they are not part of the rhyme scheme and metre, they can be seen as an essential part of the text, indicating that the miniatures to which they refer would also have been fully integral to the meaning of the texts.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Because both the *Bestiaire d’Amours* and the *Roman de la Rose* survive in so many other manuscripts, the former in almost twenty and the latter in nearly three hundred sources, and because in most of those sources they have been illustrated, we now have an idea of what was meant to be depicted in the intended miniatures. In both texts as found in other manuscripts, the text and the miniatures are closely related; the images do not just serve as decorations, but are there to illustrate and even further explain the texts.

The *Bestiaire d’Amours* is a love letter, disguised as a bestiary, that Richard de Fournival meant to send to his lady in an illuminated version, because the words and the pictures combined would bring him to her memory. In his prologue, Richard says that memory is ‘une vertu de force d’ame’ (‘a faculty of the soul’)[[9]](#footnote-9) that has two gates: hearing and seeing, the first reached by the path of *parole*, words, the second by *painture*, pictures or illustrations.[[10]](#footnote-10) This stresses the importance of the illustrations in the text to Richard himself, but the miniatures do more for the reader than simply lead to memory.[[11]](#footnote-11) They provide a critical interpretation, that of the miniature artist, that often includes extra‑textual connotations, symbolism, and allegory parallel to, but not identical with that found in the text.

Concerning the *Roman de la Rose*, John Fleming has written that ‘[t]he illustrations […] invite our attention to the figurative, rather than the literal, meaning of the poem’,[[12]](#footnote-12) in other words, they can be seen as a gloss to the text that make the reader understand the story differently. Certain miniatures in *Rose* manuscripts depict the allegorical meaning of the poem rather than representing exactly that which is read in the text, by the use of emblematic and symbolic elements that would have been easily recognisable for the contemporary medieval audience, such as the fleur‑de‑lys as a representation of the kingdom of France, the fox for friars, or the pelican representing the passion of Christ.[[13]](#footnote-13) Interpretations of a text in the miniatures depend firstly on the artists, their understanding (or misunderstanding) of the text, their cultural and stylistic context, reflecting the illuminator’s technical skills as well as his symbolical implications; and secondly on the cultural context of the reader, both varying from one region or time to another. In the thirteenth century these additional meanings found in the iconographical presentation of the *Rose* were often religious in nature, but this decreased somewhat during the fourteenth century.[[14]](#footnote-14) If the reader and the miniature artist find themselves in the same context, or if the reader understands the context in which the miniatures were painted, the illuminator’s interpretation of the text can be understood by the audience, in which case the images can, as Fleming said, indeed be seen as a gloss to the text, providing another layer of meaning, and connecting the *Rose* to other texts and other arts outside of its direct context in a way that the text itself does not.

Without having had access to the intended illustrations, the readers of Fr. 12786 missed out on this layer. They may very well have been able to understand the literal story of the *Roman de la Rose*, and of the *Bestiaire d’Amours*, and they may have discovered several levels of symbolism and meaning in the words of the texts, reflected through extra‑textual references, irony, allegory, and many other narrative techniques employed by the authors of both texts, but they will not have been able to grasp the full sense that they would have had if the miniatures had been there for them to look at. As the common expression informs us, an image is worth a thousand words, but the intended miniatures in Fr. 12786 have never been painted and therefore remain mute. The absence of the images here has a strong influence on the reading experiences of the first and of later audiences of the manuscript, who now have had to miss out on a critical interpretation and annotation through the eyes of the miniature artist.

Without the miniatures available in the manuscript, the audiences also lose out on a layer of their own interpretation, one that comes into existence not through the text, so through hearing the story, but through the pictures, in which they could see and even experience the story. Sylvia Huot explains this nicely: ‘As the visual representation of an essentially oral text, the medieval illuminated manuscript has a certain theatrical – at the risk of anachronism, one might even say cinematic – quality; it does not merely describe events but, rather, stages them’.[[15]](#footnote-15)

This idea was not strange to Richard de Fournival, and we read in his introduction of the *Bestiaire*: ‘[P]ointure sert a oeil, et parole a oreille et *com*ment on puisse repairier a l’ame son memoire par pointure et par parole; si est aparant par ce que quant on uoit pointe une pointure, estoire de Troies ou autre, on les uoit fez des pointures touz les fez des prodomes qui ca en arrier es furent, ausis *com* sil fussent presant’ (‘Painting serves the eye, and word the ear, and how one can restore the memory of the mind by painting and by words; this is evident because when one sees a painting painted, the story of Troy or something else, he sees all the actions of the noblemen who lived in those times, just as if they were present’).[[16]](#footnote-16)

# Initials

There are spaces left blank for just over forty large initials of three text lines in height or more, and nearly six hundred for small initials of one or two lines in height.[[17]](#footnote-17) The section of the manuscript that contains spaces for miniatures only contains two spaces for large initials, namely at the beginning of each of the two texts. These texts were already meant to include a large amount of illustrations, which supports the idea that the larger initials in the other texts were meant to be illustrative and embellished, rather than made of a single plain colour.

Whereas the blank spaces for miniatures are relatively easy to ‘fill in’ using nothing more than other sources and the imagination, it is more difficult to get an idea of what particularly the larger initials would have and even could have looked like had the manuscript ever been finished. We cannot say much about the style and kind of initials we could have expected here, as there is much variation from one manuscript to another and even within manuscripts. On the other hand, other comparable sources and previous studies do give us some clues.

Of course initials are not merely decorative; there is a hierarchy of initials in a manuscript based on aspects such as the size, colour, and type, resulting in a clear visually structured textual organisation. Although the initials in Fr. 12786 have never been added, we do know their intended size by the spaces that were left for them, and from this the hierarchy is already very clear and matches the content of each text. It must be remarked here that the sizes of these spaces are usually very consistent per text, but not throughout the manuscript, as in some texts, such as the *Bestiaire d’Amours* and *Les ix Joies Nostre Dame*, the internal initials that mark the beginning of a new paragraph are one text line in height, and in others, such as the *Roman de la Rose* and the *Explication des Songes*, two. Throughout the first codicological unit, there are many instances where large initials are used to mark the start of paragraphs, but in the context of the much longer texts in this unit compared to those in the third unit, this seems rational. Nevertheless, this inconsistency between units and texts suggests that the scribe reproduced the initial sizes from his exemplars, without aiming for a stronger sense of unity in Fr. 12786.

We can imagine that the smaller initials, those of one or two lines in height, and perhaps also those that are three lines high, would consist of a single colour, probably alternately red and blue, as is seen in many contemporary manuscripts, and would be shaped similarly to other capitals in the script of the main text, albeit slightly larger. They may or may not have been intended to have been flourished with ink embellishments, or penwork, presumably in alternately blue (or black) and red ink to contrast the colour of the initial itself.

The fact that they have never been added might be a reason to believe that perhaps something more elaborate was meant even for the smaller initials. We know that the scribe who copied the texts had access to red ink at least, as he used it for rubrications in the middle codicological unit, and he was of course perfectly capable of writing capitals, so had all necessary tools and skills to create initials of a single colour. The fact that he did not add them, might suggest that he could not, either because the colours he wanted to use were not available, or because the initials were meant to be made of gold leaf or to be highly embellished, thereby requiring a set of skills the scribe might not have had; or that work on the manuscript was already abandoned altogether before the initials were added, for an external reason.

It is much more difficult to guess what the larger initials would have looked like, as the variation in those is usually much greater than in the smaller ones. The biggest ones are up to eleven lines in height and this amount of space suggests that they would have been painted initials, probably highly decorated and possibly even historiated, and they would certainly have been large enough to contain much detail. The use of historiated initials is closely related to the script that is used: ‘given the necessarily reduced dimensions of the eye (or counter) of the letter in the narrower proportions of Gothic script […], one can easily understand why historiated initials during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries became less frequent’.[[18]](#footnote-18) Indeed the eyes and counters of the capitals by the scribe of Fr. 12786 are very small, and would not directly allow for an elaborated scene to take place within them, but because the initials would presumably have been painted by someone other than the scribe himself, the letter shapes could have been altogether different. Whether they would have been historiated or not, the large initials would have been eye‑catching, if only because of their sheer size.

# Music

 There are two sections in Fr. 12786 where spaces have been left blank to receive music notation. The *Roman de la Poire*, the first text in the manuscript as it is compiled today, contains nineteen short *refrains* that were meant to receive monophonic notation; the spaces above those lines of text are about two text lines in height. The *Poire* survives in three other sources, of which one has got staves, but never received any music notation; one is merely a fragment of the text without any music; and the other contains notation for three of the *refrains*.[[19]](#footnote-19) Most of the *refrain* melodies, therefore, are lost forever, unless another source containing this text and containing notation for other *refrains* should be discovered in the future.

The first letters of all the *refrains* together form an acrostic, ‘Annes Tibavt Amors’.[[20]](#footnote-20) In the two surviving manuscripts in which music notation was intended but not added, fr. 12786, and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fr. 2186, this message can be read, as the blank spaces and the blank staves provide a visual contrast between the *refrains* and the rest of the text, but because the *refrains* are spread out over the long text, the acrostic will not reveal itself if it is not searched for. The seventeen *refrains* in Fr. 2186 give us ‘Aannes Tibavt Amors’, but the nineteen in Fr. 12786 read ‘O Aaenes Tibavt E Amors’. The corrupted acrostic in Fr. 12786 must be a result of either scribal errors or scribal intervention; the scribe of Fr. 12786, or the one who copied the used exemplar or the exemplar before that, may have made alterations, presumably without being aware of the acrostic’s existence in the *Poire*.

The spaces left by the scribe of Fr. 12786 are relatively small, and the words and syllables of the *refrains* are not separated any more than the rest of the text, implying that there would be just enough space for syllabic notation (that is, music with one note for each syllable of text). Indeed, the *refrains* that do survive with notation in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fr. 24431 are syllabic.

The most musical section of Fr. 12786 is the already mentioned song collection. Four *chansons* have blank spaces above their texts that were meant for monophonic music notation, so spaces of the same height as those in the *Poire*; one *chanson* was never meant to receive music at all, and is notated as if it were a prose text; and thirty‑six *chansons* were meant for three‑part polyphonic music notation. The monophonic *chansons* and notationless song are the first five of the collection, which roughly indicates an order based on genre and increasing difficulty within the song collection, an hypothesis that is reinforced by analysis of the different polyphonic genres, the more complex ones being found towards the end of the collection.[[21]](#footnote-21) The vast majority, thirty‑three *chansons*, are polyphonic *rondeaux*.

The polyphonic *rondeau* was one of several polyphonic genres arising in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, so around the time when Fr. 12786 was made. Of the entire surviving repertoire, sixteen *chansons* are attributed to Adam de la Halle, while nearly all others remain anonymous.[[22]](#footnote-22) Adam’s *rondeaux* are written and musically notated in the so‑called *Adam de la Halle manuscript*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fr. 25566, which is presumed to contain Adam’s *opera omnia*.[[23]](#footnote-23) ‘This immaculate presentation of Adam’s polyphonic *rondeaux* is at once fortunate and problematic,’ explains Mark Everist, ‘fortunate because we have apparently the complete works in the genre by one of the few named composers from the end of the thirteenth century, and possibly in a format that could have been authorised by the composer himself; problematic because the works of Adam not only dominate our view of the polyphonic *rondeau* of this period but are almost the only representatives of the genre.’[[24]](#footnote-24)

Of the forty-one songs in the song collection in Fr. 12786, seventeen are unica, and twenty-four survive in other manuscripts. One of the main sources to contain other versions of these *chansons*, is Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Regina latina 1490, a late thirteenth‑ or early fourteenth‑ century *chansonnier* and important source for both trouvère and troubadour songs, consisting of more than one hundred and eighty folios, which includes six *chansons* that are also found in Fr. 12786.[[25]](#footnote-25) *Brunete cui j’ai mon cuer doné* is one voice‑part from a three‑voice motet that is found in Reg. lat. 1490, as well as in several other manuscripts. Other concordances between Fr. 12786 and Reg. lat. 1490 are polyphonic *rondeaux* in the first, but are given as monophonic *chansons* in the latter, which means that we cannot reconstruct the music intended for Fr. 12786 based on this witness. One of the manuscripts that contains the aforementioned motet text, as well as another motet from which one of the *chansons* in Fr. 12786 is derived, is Montpellier, Faculté de Médicine, H 196. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 308 also contains eight concordances, but there is no music notation in this *chansonnier* either.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The most important manuscript sharing songs with Fr. 12786 is the already mentioned Fr. 25566, the *Adam de la Halle manuscript*, which contains the only four texts in the song collection in Fr. 12786 that are not anonymous; they are attributed to Adam de la Halle. In Fr. 25566 they survive with polyphonic notation, and not only does this provide us with more musical material than the manuscripts in which the polyphonic *chansons* are given as monophonic ones, it also gives us the opportunity to compare how the *rondeaux* are laid out in both manuscripts.

Polyphonic *rondeaux*, as said above, were a relatively new genre at the time during which Fr. 12786 was made, which means that not only poets and composers, but also scribes could experiment with the form. In devising a suitable layout for this unfamiliar genre, scribes needed to consider firstly how to arrange the different musical voices on the page in relation to one another, and secondly how to represent the musical‑poetic structure in a way that was both clear and economical. Motets and other genres in which each musical voice has its own text, are usually presented in their manuscripts with each voice and its associated text separately, but in genres such as the polyphonic *rondeau* in which there are three (or more) musical voices but only one text for all of them, it is not necessary to separate the staves, and therefore a system or ‘stack’ of staves can be used to present the song on the parchment in a more efficient manner. In the structure of a *rondeau*, ABaAabAB, the musical material is repeated often, and there is no need for all music to be written out; the first two lines (A and B) present all material that is needed to sing the entire *chanson*.

The scribes of Fr. 12786 and Fr. 25566 came up with similar solutions for the notation of the *rondeaux*, in which it is clear which notes go with which syllables, the whole *chanson* can be seen at a glance, and the entire text can easily be read, even when one eye is kept on the music. In Fr. 25566 there are two columns and in Fr. 12786 the polyphonic *rondeaux* are given in one, which is the reason that the scribe of Fr. 12786 had space left over on the right hand side of the folio, in which he could fit the *rondeau* text apart from the first two lines, for which music was needed. The scribe in Fr. 25566 had a narrower space and therefore had to write the remainder of the text underneath the first two lines and the music. Both options have a similar effect and are practical, but the lay‑out in Fr. 12786 looks untidy compared to that in Fr. 25566, because the narrow columns on the right hand side of the folio are not all of the same width, but are adjusted to the length of the text; furthermore, these jagged‑edged narrow columns are outlined with thin ink lines drawn without the aid of a ruler. It must be said, however, that the unfinished nature may contribute to the sloppier appearance; the song collection would have looked very different had the music notation and the initials been added to the folios.

# A Helping Hand

Although some of the many craftsmen who were supposed to collaborate with each other in the production of Fr. 12786 never did so, there is much to be said about those who did get involved in the process, and perhaps even more about those who did not. It is interesting to consider why they did not apply their skills to the folios of this book, and there are some clues that show how the collaboration was to take place.

# Early Stages

Although we do not know where the parchment of Fr. 12786 was made, we can compare its overall quality to the material used in other manuscripts, and study its consistency. Based on this we can argue that the close similarity between flesh‑ and hair side, the smooth surface, the small amount of holes and stitches, and the thinness of the folios result from the work of a skilled parchment maker, and the probably relatively expensive material that was purchased for this manuscript must have been meant for what was to be an expensive book.[[27]](#footnote-27)

The quires were folded before the text was written. Prickings that can still be seen at the tops and bottoms of most quires show that they were made a quire at the time, which results in ruling on the folios that is consistent within each quire, but varies slightly from one to the next.[[28]](#footnote-28) After the quires were folded and the prickings were made, dry‑point ruling was applied, either by the scribe or by someone else. Some texts are written in one column, and others in two, and the prickings and ruling were made when this layout was already planned. Because the prickings are the same in each folio of a quire, alternation between one and two columns within a quire could have been somewhat problematic. In the two quires in which this happens, the sixth and eleventh respectively, prickings cannot or no longer be distinguished, and the eleventh quire, in which the song collection is written, contains no ruling apart from on the one page that consists of two columns, on which ruling is drawn in pencil rather than dry‑point. This suggests that there may have been no prickings at all in this quire (and possibly not in the sixth quire either), indicating that special care was taken here by the manuscript makers, who knew the lay‑outs would be inconsistent.

# The Scribe

The scribe remains anonymous, and there are no other known surviving manuscripts or fragments from his hand. Based on his script, a common gothic bookhand, Fr. 12786 can be roughly dated and located. Although the hand is fairly consistent, there is a section at the beginning of the codicological unit that is now in the middle in which the script is more regular and must have been written in a more careful, and probably slower manner. This script then gradually evolves into the same slightly more irregular and more quickly written style we find in the rest of the manuscript.

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This might imply that the middle unit was written first, and when the scribe found out that he was not going fast enough to finish the entire book within the limits of time he had set himself or agreed upon with the one who ordered the manuscript to be made, he started writing faster.

The ink used in Fr. 12786 is of a deep black colour throughout the manuscript, apart from the section that is written in the more careful script that is described above, which is of a much lighter brownish colour. If the scribe did indeed start his work on the manuscript at the beginning of the second codicological unit, he may have had some problems with the consistency of his ink as well as with his possibly too time‑consuming lettering, but he solved both issues at the same time, increasing his speed whilst gradually adding more colour.

Of course this is only one of many possible explanations for the difference in script and ink at the beginning of the middle unit, but it is a plausibility that impacts how we look at the current collation of the manuscript. If the scribe started at this point, he may also have meant for it to come first. As argued above, the intended or original order of the quires does not directly influence the reading experience for the first or intended audience, and does not have a large influence on the intertextual relations, but if the second codicological unit used to be at the beginning, this does mean that the units have been shuffled around, and that the manuscript has been manipulated by someone who was presumably unhappy with the order. This person, who may have been one of the original manuscript makers, but who may also have been someone who encountered Fr. 12786 much later in its history, might have made more changes than just the order of the codicological units.

We know for sure that the scribe had access not only to black, but also to red ink, since the rubrications that are found in the what is now the middle unit are written in the same hand. Some rubrics are slightly shorter and others slightly longer than the space left blank for them, the former leaving some blank space between the rubric and the rest of the text, and the latter resulting in lettering that is noticeably compressed to fit into the space, which proves that the text in black ink was written first, and it shows that the scribe made some small miscalculations. The rubrics have several functions: they provide a visual structure in the text to help the reader, as each rubric explains what is seen in each miniature; but they can also be seen as a message left by the scribe for the miniature artist, who now only needed to take a look at the words in red to see what he was supposed to paint where. Thus even though the one who was to paint the miniatures may never have laid eyes on Fr. 12786, we can witness some communication between him and the scribe.

The scribe also left notes for the artist who was to paint the initials in the form of cue initials. In contrast to the rubrics, the cue initials would be obscured once the initials had been painted, and thus were never intended to be seen by the reader. They are therefore evidence of the normally hidden communication from scribe to painter, rendered visible to readers of the manuscript because their collaboration never took place.[[29]](#footnote-29)

# The Collaboration that Never Took Place

The big question that can, and should, be asked about any unfinished manuscript, is why it has been left in this uncompleted state, what happened that made the manuscript makers decide to abandon their work on the book. Unfortunately, it is almost always impossible to find the answer to this question, but it might be worthwhile to consider some hypotheses.

As argued above, the miscellaneous character of the book suggests that it was made for an individual, according to his or her personal taste. Someone ordered the manuscript, and this man or woman and the manuscript makers agreed on what texts were to be written in, what kind of illumination there was to be, and how expensive the book as a whole would turn out to be. If this person passed away before the manuscript was completed, this would have been a good reason not to finish it. Much still needed to be done and there would no longer be a need, nor enough money, to hire a miniature artist, and a music specialist.

If we accept this hypothesis, we should wonder what happened to the book. If it was unfinished in so many aspects already, we can imagine it was left unbound as well, which could explain why the codicological units have been mixed up, if this is in fact the case. There are very few clues that reveal anything about the provenance of Fr. 12786. Library stamps and a catalogue entry indicate that it has been in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris since the time this was still the Bibliothèque Royale, but where the book was before this, or how it came to be where it has been staying now for more than two hundred years, we do not know.[[30]](#footnote-30)

There are other hypotheses to be considered to explain why the manuscript has been left uncompleted. There could simply have been a lack of available materials, such as the perfect pigments, or gold leaf; or the right craftsmen may not have been around, which is, however, unlikely considering the blossoming culture of manuscript making in fourteenth‑century France.

More plausible is the idea that the craftsmen were there, but they did not have access to the right exemplars. The *Roman de la Rose* and the *Bestiaire d’Amours* were widely copied texts, almost always accompanied by miniatures, and it must have been relatively easy to find a source to copy these paintings from, but there are many fewer surviving exemplars for some of the other texts, and exemplars for much of the musical contents of Fr. 12786 have now disappeared altogether. We  cannot know how many sources would have contained these songs and *refrains* at the time when Fr. 12786 was made, or whether there was an exemplar that contained this entire collection, but the relatively small amount of surviving manuscripts transmitting some of the *chansons* could indicate that they were scarce in those days already, and could suggest that the manuscript makers did not have access to the musicof all of them. Incompletion in one aspect may have prompted the abandonment of the whole: once it was clear that the music could not be supplied, there would be no point in the miniature artist coming in with his time‑consuming job and expensive materials to work on a book that was destined to remain incomplete.

Many musical manuscripts survive for which music notation was never intended, they only contain the texts of songs. These manuscripts are more common even than those in which music notation was applied, or for which it was intended. When music notation is missing, but staves have been drawn or spaces have been left blank for staves, this might indicate that the used exemplar was such a text‑only manuscript, and that another source was meant to supply the musical material at a later stage. Non‑musical texts or musical texts that contain both text and music notation do not provide any such insight in the use of different exemplars that musical texts with intended yet missing notation do. The scribe of Fr. 12786 must have had access to a source that contained the texts of the songs – unless he knew them all by heart – and to a source that transmitted the *Poire*.[[31]](#footnote-31) He knew where to leave spaces blank for the staves, which could suggest that his exemplar did contain music notation, in which case he or a specific music specialist could have copied it, however, the scribe did not leave more space between the syllables underneath the spaces where the music was to be written, which in turn might suggest an exemplar with the texts, but without notation.[[32]](#footnote-32)

In the latter scenario, he may well have invented the visual representation of the polyphonic *rondeaux* himself, in which case we can say that he must have been familiar with the general conventions of musical layout; he knew the distinction between monophonic and polyphonic music, as is shown by the differences in height of the spaces he left blank. Thus, we can argue that he must have known that non‑syllabic music (in which more notes are sung on one syllable) would have required him to leave more space between the syllables of the text, which in turn suggests that all music in the manuscript would have been syllabic.

Even though we could imagine that the manuscript makers did not have access to exemplars for all songs and *refrains*, they may well have been able to find some of the melodies, and there are countless examples of manuscripts that have been finished, only with the exception of the music notation for some of the songs.

# Reading Between the Lines

Even though Fr. 12786 has been left unfinished, it does show users’ traces. We might wonder therefore, whether we should actually view the book as incomplete, or whether it can be seen as a finished product in some sense, except perhaps not one containing everything that was originally intended for it. In this final section, the use of Fr. 12786 will be discussed.

# Users’ Traces

‘We cannot know […] how often medieval readers mentally corrected their texts as they read, in what places they chose to do so, in what places not. The millions of written corrections made by medieval correctors and readers may give us some clues. […] Once we carry out such work [of surveying readers’ marks], we will be in a far better position to understand the peculiar texture of sense and error that greeted medieval readers as they worked through their scripta.’[[33]](#footnote-33)

Throughout the manuscript’s history, several people wrote on the folios of Fr. 12786, correcting words, or marking passages they must have considered to be of importance. These users’ traces are few, and very short, and they are difficult to analyse and often very hard to date.[[34]](#footnote-34) They cannot tell us who the users were, but they do show us what these readers found important and, to some extent, how they read the texts provided by the scribe. ‘When the book as visual object is seen in terms of corrections we draw closer to readers, […] such corrections are explicitly linked with readers’.[[35]](#footnote-35)

One of the earliest users to have left his remarks was more or less contemporary with the scribe; their hands are very similar in style, which might also indicate that the book was used in roughly the same region as the one in which it was written. This person used a light brown ink in which he made corrections in the *Roman de la Poire* and possibly one in the *Roman de la Rose*;[[36]](#footnote-36) he added letters and abbreviation signs, some of which actually rectified scribal errors, while others are more difficult to explain. It is clear that this user read the text very carefully, word for word and letter for letter, and the fact that he made these corrections means that it was important to him that the text was accurate, implying that he intended to read it again, or that he meant for someone else toread it after him.

There are no traces of this user elsewhere in the manuscript, and scribal errors in the other texts seem to have remained unnoticed by him. This might suggest that this person had a preference for the *Poire*, but because this text is the first one in Fr. 12786, at least in its current order, it may be that the user meant to correct the other texts as well, but never did so. It would be ironically appropriate perhaps that even this person’s use of the uncompleted book was left unfinished. Other possible explanations for this user only correcting the *Poire* are that he had an exemplar containing this text, but not the others, or, perhaps more interestingly, that the codicological units were not together at this time.

Another interesting user to have left his traces must have lived some time after the scribe and the user described above; his hand appears to be slightly more recent, but is also a gothic hand. In dark brown ink he copied the cue initials the scribe had already given, writing capitals where the scribe had left a minuscule. Interestingly, his marks are found only on two folios, f. 97v and f. 98r, the very end of the final text in the manuscript, *Le Lunaire de Salomon*. It is unclear why he did so, but an interesting hypothesis would be that this person was intending to paint initials. Because his letter shapes and those by our main scribe differ somewhat, which is particularly evident in the letters ‘e’ and ‘l’, it may have been easier for him to rewrite all cue initials to avoid making any mistakes later on, or perhaps he found it confusing that the cue initials were miniscules where the initials would have been capitals. The fact that his cue initials are only found at the final three folios might imply that he started at the back of the manuscript, which makes as much sense as starting from the beginning when there is no need for reading the texts. He never finished his job, which suggests that he must have realised very soon after he started that there was no need to do this, perhaps because he had then found out that there were not going to be any initials in this book, at least not painted by him.

At least three and probably more than four users made corrections in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, all of them using a light brown ink of various shades, some of them so light that they can hardly be read. One of the users applied very short Latin glosses to the *Poire* and the *Rose*, but they do not seem to have much to do with the texts.[[37]](#footnote-37) This user proves that at least the first two codicological units were bound together by the time he had access to Fr. 12786.

Another, whose script resembles that of the user who re‑wrote the cue initials, made a correction in the *Rose* in a similar way in which the first user described above made his corrections in the *Poire*, indicating that he read the text carefully and that he felt the need for it to be correct. Another made a more invasive correction when he changed the word ‘consoil’ into ‘son oeil’, showing that he was not only a careful reader, but also very familiar with the text, the *Roman de la Rose*.[[38]](#footnote-38)

In the narrow space between *Les ix Joies Nostre Dame* and *Le Dit d’Aristote* someone believed it was important to write down the name of the author of the text, ‘par Rutebeuf ’. Whether it applies to the text that just finished there or to the text that begins, is unclear, as both were written by Rutebeuf.[[39]](#footnote-39) A late hand in pencil did something similar to the *Roman de la Poire*, but rather than the author’s name, he wrote down the text’s title in the large space that was left blank by the scribe for the opening initial.

Also in pencil, unfortunately entirely undatable, are underlined words: ‘escharnisserres’, ‘trisophas’, ‘ventex’, ‘enbourdent’, ‘luneison’, and many more.[[40]](#footnote-40) These words are not necessarily the key words of the sentence each time, which makes it less likely that the one who did this did so in order to find the structure in the text quicker later on. Most underlined words are uncommon ones, or long ones, and the word ‘atrempable(e)’ has been underlined both on f. 25v and on f. 82v, suggesting that the underliner’s interest was in the words themselves more than in the texts.

He underlined words in *Le Livre des Pierres*, the *Bestiaire d’Amours*, the *Roman de la Rose*, the song collection, *Les Prophecies que Ezechiel li Prophetes fist*, the dream treatise, *Les ix Joies Nostre Dame* and *Le Lunaire de Salomon*, and it seems that the more obscure texts were used more intensively by him than the very popular ones. The fact that he went through so many texts in the same way could suggest that he was not necessarily reading these texts very closely, but perhaps he was learning the language. The words he marked may have been those he struggled with and these texts may have served as practice material for him. As said, because all we have of this person are pencil lines, there is no way of knowing when he lived, but it is very interesting that the manuscript may have been used as an educational tool rather than a book for providing entertainment or information at some point in its history. If we assume that this person was learning (Old) French, this means that he either lived a lot later when the language had already evolved and changed much, or that French was not his native language at all, which means that he visited France, or that the manuscript had at this point left its home region, only to return later.

Apart from traces that were added to the manuscript by its users, there are also many deletions and erasures to be found. The scribe himself deleted words and lines in several different ways, depending on when he noticed his mistake, how much text was incorrect, and whether or not he needed to rewrite it in the same space, but there are also instances in which the ink was scratched off the parchment in a different manner than in others, implying that the scribe was not the only one who removed text .[[41]](#footnote-41) These erasures cannot be traced back to any time or region, let alone to an individual user, but they again imply that someone must have read the book very carefully and felt the need for it to be correct. The broad range of reader’s traces shows us that the manuscript was used for many centuries and that different readers read the texts each in their own way.

# Intended and Actual Audience

There is no evidence that Fr. 12786 was produced under circumstances of commercial production; instead its unique combination of texts as well as its inclusion of some obscure texts would strongly suggest that this manuscript was compiled for a specific intended audience.[[42]](#footnote-42) There is no direct proof about who the intended audience of the manuscript may have been, but the texts themselves and the miscellaneous character of the book give us some information. The individual who ordered Fr. 12786 to be made must have had a range of interests, reflected by the variation in the texts; he or she must have been able to read in French; and in order to appreciate the texts fully, he or she may have been familiar with other texts that are not found in Fr. 12786 but which are referred to directly or indirectly in the manuscript. Nevertheless, it is not necessarily required to understand every detail of a text in order to enjoy it, or to take something out of it.[[43]](#footnote-43)

The texts that are found in the manuscript are not only very different in thematic and stylistic aspects, they also vary in quality. It may not be of any surprise that the more famous texts can be seen as more complex than some of the more obscure ones, they contain several layers of meaning, they include extratextual references that alter the meaning of the text, they are linguistically of a high quality, and so forth. The three unica outside the song collection, *Les Prophecies que Ezechiel li Prophetes fist*, *L’Explication des Songes*, and the *Ordre d’Amors*, provide a striking contrast to the *Bestiaire d’Amours* and the *Roman de la Rose*; they are very repetitive, not extremely insightful, contain phrases in which metre is favoured over grammatical correctness, and show other aspects that demonstrate that their authors were not the greatest of poets or thinkers.[[44]](#footnote-44) The intended reader must have appreciated both the complex texts and the simpler ones, suggesting that he or she was either highly educated, fully understanding the first kind and appreciating the second because of a reason external to its textual quality, or that he or she was less educated, enjoying all texts, but perhaps not fully grasping all layers of meaning in the more complex ones.

The high quality of the parchment, coupled with the large and copious blank spaces forinitials and miniatures – not to mention possible border decorations, for which no clues are left behind – imply that Fr. 12786 would have been an expensive manuscript.

Unsurprisingly, miscellanies come in various forms. Many of them are relatively cohesive in content, containing only religious texts, or only legal documents, but there are other examples of miscellanies such as Fr. 12786 in which different types of texts are bound together. One of these examples is London, British Library, Harley 2253, a manuscript made in England, and probably intended for communal use that consists of a late thirteenth‑century and an early‑fourteenth‑century section, each of them copied by a single scribe.[[45]](#footnote-45) The first section comprises hagiographical texts in Anglo‑Norman French, while the second section covers religious as well as secular texts in prose, verse, and music (without notation) in Middle English, Anglo‑Norman, and Latin.[[46]](#footnote-46) Similarities between Harley 2253 and Fr. 12786 are plentiful: both were made around the same time, only one scribe (or one per section in the case of the former book) copied the texts, and these texts vary in content, length, form, and style. In Harley 2253 an additional layer of variety is found in the use of three different languages.

Another remarkable example is Oxford, Bodleian Library Douce 308, a miscellany containing a *chansonnier* with more than five‑hundred *trouvère* songs (without notation), and various narratives, romances, and other texts in both verse and prose, and with a large variation in quality, including the *Bestiaire d’Amours*, a dream vision, and, formerly, an Apocalypse that is now no longer part of the collation.[[47]](#footnote-47) Douce 308 and Fr. 12786 have much in common, as they were copied roughly at the same time, and can in some ways be seen as being part of the same tradition. Furthermore, the striking resemblance between the combinations of texts in the two manuscripts is evidence that such miscellanies were made more often, and suggests that this was not an uncommon way of producing a manuscript, but it still does not provide us with much more information about possible intended audiences.[[48]](#footnote-48)

One plausible scenario is that the manuscript was meant to serve as a present from one individual for another, perhaps as a token of love, an hypothesis that is supported by the theme of courtly love that is found in most texts in Fr. 12786, and perhaps even more so by the inclusion of the *Bestiaire d’Amours*, in nature a love letter from Richard de Fournival to his lady. This hypothesis is however problematized by the presence of the more practical texts; it is more difficult to understand why anyone would want to express their love through an almanac or a lapidary, and the *Ordre d’Amors*, a set of rules that tells people how to behave in love, seems particularly problematic in this context.

The manuscript could also have been made for a group of people rather than an individual. When seen as a communal object, the variety in themes, purposes, styles, and quality can more easily be explained. However, examples of communal miscellaneous manuscripts are often not as luxurious as Fr. 12786 was intended to be; they hardly ever contain illuminations, their parchment is usually of a lower quality, and the script is rarely of as high a standard as that from the hand of the scribe of

Fr. 12786.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Because the three codicological units of Fr. 12786 are not inextricably linked to each other, they may have been meant as three smaller books, or parts of other collections. The appearance of a single hand throughout the manuscript does not provide us with any conclusive evidence on the matter, but merely suggests that the three units are related to each other, a theory that is also strongly implied, but not irrefutably proven by the units currently being bound together as they are.

The middle unit, containing the *Roman de la Rose* and the *Bestiaire d’Amours*, can point to a very large group of possible readers, as both of these texts were read in different ways by audiences of various literary backgrounds.[[50]](#footnote-50) The final codicological unit, consisting of the song collection, *Les Prophecies que Ezechiel li Prophetes fist*, *L’Explication des Songes*, *L’Ordre d’Amors*, *La Trinitiez Nostre Dame*, *Les ix Joies Nostre Dame*, *Le Dit d’Aristote*, and *Le Lunaire de Salomon* is of almost as miscellaneous a character as Fr. 12786 as a whole is, although its texts are of a more practical nature than most of the others in the manuscript, and thereby imply, albeit imprecisely, a somewhat different type of audience.

The users’ traces are few and may give us some insights into *how* the texts were read, though we remain in the dark about *who* they were read by. Because the intended audience is so unknown, due to a lack of direct evidence within the manuscript or elsewhere, and the miscellaneous and personal nature of the collection of texts, we cannot easily compare the actual and the intended audience to each other. The intended readers may never have laid eyes on the manuscript, but equally they may have been the very ones who left their marks on the folios.

# Conclusion

The obscurity caused by the current collation of the manuscript about the intended order of the texts and the uncertainty about whether or not the codicological units originally belonged

together, particularly considering the lapidary at the end of the first and the *Roman de la Rose* at the end of the second unit missing their ending, raises more questions about the intentions of the manuscript makers, but it is evident that they meant for more things to be added to the book.

The manuscript makers’ intentions probably corresponded to those of the intended audience, if we believe the book was made for an individual according to his or her own taste, and therefore to this person things were missing from Fr. 12786 as well. If the first audience and the original intended audience were the same, in other words if the person who ordered the book to be made was the one who owned and used it first, this first audience may well have considered the book to be unfinished, incomplete, but he or she did not have the miniatures, initials, music notation, and possible extra illumination added at any point, nor did any audience afterwards.

Even though the miscellaneous character of Fr. 12786 implies that the manuscript was supposed to be a highly personal collection of texts, reflecting an individual’s taste and personality, the users’ traces throughout the book, consisting mainly of minor corrections, very brief glosses, obscure deletions, or marking of certain words or short phrases, demonstrate that it was used not (just) by this original intended audience, but by many others over the course of centuries. These users may not have chosen the same combination of texts had they had the opportunity to design the manuscript themselves, but they read the texts very carefully, most of them having one or two favourites or preferences, and they thought it important that the texts were correct, each in their own way making minor improvements for future readers, being themselves or others. Hardly any of the readers’ traces are in any way related to the manuscript’s unfinished nature; nobody in the manuscript’s history has added music notation,[[51]](#footnote-51) miniatures, or initials, implying that they did not want them enough to make the effort to add these things to the blank spaces, or, of course, that they could not. Perhaps to these readers then, the manuscript was finished, or at least it was finished enough.

The song collection may seem the most unfinished part of Fr. 12786, lacking its initials and its intended music notation. The spaces left blank with the intention of receiving polyphonic notation cover most of the folios in this section of the manuscript, leaving much to the imagination. But even this collection could be of much use to readers, who would not need initials to understand the text, and who would not necessarily need notated music to know the melodies. There are many examples of *chansonniers* after all, in which no music notation was ever intended, books that transmit the song texts only, meant for those who knew the melodies by heart, or who had other sources to provide them with this specific information.

The lack of miniatures in the *Bestiaire d’Amours* and the *Roman de la Rose* does impoverish the reader’s experience, but it does not render these texts unusable. There are likewise examples of manuscripts transmitting these texts without any miniatures ever having been intended.[[52]](#footnote-52)

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Regardless of what the original plan was, Fr. 12786 now resides in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, firmly bound as one book, its modern foliation following the current order of the quires and showing no gaps, nothing missing. Perhaps we should pay less attention to what is *not* there, and focus on what *is*, just as the book’s users did throughout its history. Fr. 12786 may not have turned out exactly as the manuscript makers intended, but because finishedness and unfinishedness are flexible and subjective concepts with a large grey area between them, we could argue that at least to its later readers the book was finished, simply because it apparently contained everything they needed or wanted from it; that when the manuscript makers abandoned their work on the book, they considered it finished in a way, because no matter the state of the manuscript, their work finished there; and that after every later addition or after each rebinding the manuscript was finished again and again.

Perhaps we should stop seeing the manuscript as unfinished, but rather see it as what it is:

a window into the early fourteenth century, a witness to manuscript production and collaboration between various craftsmen, a personal testimony of an unknown individual’s personality, an insight in various reading practices, and, simply, a wonderful work of art.

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Fig. 1: © Paris, BnF, Fr. 12786, f. 3 (detail)

1. For example: Mark Everist. ‘The Polyphonic “rondeau” c. 1300: Repertory and Context’, Early Music History, 15, 1996, p. 59‑96; Sylvia Huot. From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry, London: Cornell University Press, 1987. There has been some debate about the manuscript’s dating, but most scholars now agree on a rough dating of the early fourteenth century. Most secondary sources do not give any additional information on how they got to this conclusion, which is probably derived from their own or others’ analysis of the script. Localisation is also based on palaeographical analysis of the script, and on the fact that the texts in the manuscript are inOld French. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Although philological and linguistic research might bring some insights into the matter, they will never be able to provide any conclusive evidence without some additional and specific information that is not yet known. Regional spellings can say something about the scribe, but could likewise give information about the source the scribe used. Therefore, this kind of research is important, but cannot provide any definite answers about where a manuscript was produced. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This can also be seen in Table 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. i‑iii8, iv6 (7 and 8 removed), v‑ix8, x5 (4‑6 removed), xi‑xiii8. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Langlois, Ernest, *Les Manuscrits du Roman de la Rose: Description et classement*, Lille: Tallendier; Paris: Champion, 1910. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The foliation is modern (possibly nineteenth‑century) and follows the current order of the codicological units.

Unfortunately, there are no signs of older foliation, so the original and intended order remain unknown. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ralph Hanna. ‘Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Literary Production in Late Medieval England’, in: Stephen G. Nichols; Siegfried Wenzel. *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, University of

Michigan Press, 1996, p. 37‑52, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See: Langlois, 1910. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Wording is slightly different in fr. 12786. Translation by Elizabeth Sears: Elizabeth Sears. ‘Sensory Perception and its Metaphors in the Time of Richard of Fournival’, in: *Medicine and the Five Senses*, ed. by W. F. Bynum and R. Porter, Cambridge, 1993, p. 17‑39, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Painture* can also be translated as *colour* or *illumination*. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See: Sears, 1993. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. John V. Fleming. *The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Fleming: p. 20‑27; 247‑49. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Fleming, p. 37‑42. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Huot *From Song to Book*, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. As found in Fr. 12786, f. 31v; own translation. There is a scribal error here that is difficult to explain; the scribe seems to have inserted some words near the end of this sentence, or had some issues with the word order, so that the literal translation of what is copied in Fr. 12786 would be something like ‘[...] the story of Troy or something else, he sees them actions of the paintings all the actions of the noblemen who came before them just as if they were present’. Because of the scribal error, it is not surprising that the wording is slightly different in other versions of the text: ‘Car quant on voit painte une estoire, ou de Troie ou d’autre, on voit les fais des preudhommes ke cha en ariere furent, ausi com s’il fussent present’ (‘for when one sees a story illuminated, whether of Troy or of something else, he sees the action of the worthy men that lived in those times, just as though they were present’). Huot *From Song to Book*, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The song collection is excluded here, as it not directly evident how large and of what shape the initials were intended to be; the spaces left blank to receive music notation, in most instances three‑part polyphony, are very large, and the initials could have been as high as the staves, or only as high as a line of text. There are few other sources for comparison, as polyphonic *rondeaux* were a relatively new genre at the time when Fr. 12786 was made, and in those sources, of which Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français 25566 is the most important one, the scribes laid out the songs differently on the page. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Albert Derolez. *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books: From the Twelfth to the Early Sixteenth Century*. In:

Cambridge Studies in Palaeography and Codicology, 9, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. No notation, but blank staves are found in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français 2186. Three *refrains* are notated in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français 24431. The fragment is part of a private collection. See for example Everist: p. 75; Ardis Butterfield. ‘Repetition and Variation in the Thirteenth‑Century Refrain’, *Journal of the Royal Music Association*, 116, No. 1, 1991, p. 1‑23, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Annes is the name of the lady spoken of in the *Roman de la Poire*, Thibaut is the name of the author, and Amors is both the main character in and the main topic of the text. Christiane Marchello‑Nizia, ed. *Le Roman de la Poire par Thibaut*, Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1984, p. xxvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *Chansons* 1 and 2 are singled‑out motet voices, and the same might be the case for *chansons* 3, 5, and 6. *Chanson* 4 is a *chanson à refrain*. *Chansons* 7 to 41 are polyphonic *rondeaux*, with the exception of numbers 32 and 40, both of which are free forms, the latter with a more complex (rhyme) structure than the first. *Chansons* 7, 20, and 33 can best be seen as *rondeaux tercets*, and *chanson* 38 is a *rondeau quatrain*, more complex forms than the *rondeaux simples* the others are. An organisation of the collection based on an increase in difficulty cannot be confirmed by looking at genres only, but there does seem to be a trend, and we can imagine that the music might have been increasingly complex and challenging towards the end of the collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The surviving repertoire of the time consists of fifty polyphonic *rondeaux*: the sixteen Adam de la Halle *chansons* that are found in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fr. 25566 (f. 32v‑34v); thirty‑one others that appear in Fr. 12786; two anonymous *chansons* in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Collection de Picardie 67 (f. 68r), and one *rondeau* by Jehannot de l’Escurel that survives in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fr. 146 (f. 57r). See Everist. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. This manuscript also contains the *Bestiaire d’Amours*, a fifth concordance between the two manuscripts. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See: Everist, pp. 59‑60. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Judith A. Peraino. *Giving Voice to Love: Song and Self-Expression from the Troubadours to Guillaume de Machaut*,

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. xix. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Other manuscripts that contain concordances with the song collection in Fr. 12786 are: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, N.a.f. 13521; Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek Lit. 115; Charleville‑Mézières, Mediathèque Voyelles, 78 (fragment); and Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 1543. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. See for example: Robert Fuchs; Christiane Meinert; Johannes Schrempf. *Pergament: Geschichte, Material, Konservierung, Restaurierung*, in: Kölner Beiträge zur Restaurierung und Konservierung von Kunst‑ und Kulturgut, Vol.12, Munich: Siegl, 2001; Orietta Da Rold. ‘Materials’, in: Alexandra Gillespie; Daniel Wakelin, ed. *The Production of Books in England 1350-1500*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 12‑33. It is difficult to establish the quality of parchment, because this is always based on comparison with other manuscripts one has seen before. In my opinion however, when paying attention to such aspects as thickness, flexibility, the number of natural holes, stitches,colour, and smoothness, it is possible to make a relatively objective judgement. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Quires i, ii, iii, iv, vii, viii, ix, x, and xii have prickings that can still be seen. In the other ones, they may have been trimmed off, either during the first binding or a rebinding. The folios have not been trimmed very neatly. The flyleaf that is foliated f. 100 was not even trimmed at all, at least not after it came to the manuscript: it is wider than all others and its outer edge has curled a little, which supports the hypothesis that it was added to the manuscript at a later stage than the body of the codex. The top edge of the manuscript block is somewhat darker than the bottom and the side ones, suggesting that either the side and bottom edge have been trimmed more recently, or that the manuscript was stored in such a way that the top edge was exposed to more sunlight. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. As said above, the scribe may have intended to paint the smaller initials himself. In that case, the message is to himself, as an *aide-mémoire*, and would save him time later. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. ##  Stamps on ff. 1r, 98v (Bibliothèque Royale), and 100v (Bibliothèque nationale de France). See the catalogue entry in Anciens catalogues de la Bibliothèque du Roi et de différentes collections qui sont venues l’accroître aux XVIIe, XVIIIe et XIXe siècles. Catalogues des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque royale, in-4°. Tome XLVI. Suppl. fr., t. II. Nos 201-400 (Bibliothèque

nationale de France, français 5494, f. 165r). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The notion that someone might know the complete texts of songs by heart without knowing the music runs counter to the normal process of song transmission; the existence of so many song manuscripts that were never intended to receive musical notation (for example Oxford, Bodleian Library Douce 308) suggests that it was more usual to memorise the music, but to require a written copy to recall the text. These manuscripts serve ‘not as materials suited to a singer’s initial learning of a song, […] but as aides‑mémoires for music already encountered through aural means’. See: Helen Deeming; Elizabeth Eva Leach: ‘Songs, Scattered and Gathered’, in: Helen Deeming; Elizabeth Eva Leach, ed. *Manuscripts and Medieval Song: Inscription, Performance, Context*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 272‑73. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Texts laid out to receive musical notation are often spaced wider, the width between words and syllables depending on the type of music, so that each syllable can be correctly aligned with the musical notes above it. See: Helen Deeming. ‘Observations on the Habits of Twelfth‑ and Thirteenth‑Century Music Scribes’, *Scriptorium*, 60, 2006, 38‑59. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. John Dagenais. *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the ‘Libro de buen amor’*,Princeton: Princeton

University Press, 1994, p. 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Because the traces usually only consist of one letter or one or two short words, dating cannot for this purpose be precise. Rough datings serve as an indication about when the manuscript was used in which way, but may be incorrect. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. D. H. Green. *Medieval Listening and Reading: The Primary Reception of German Literature 800-1300*, Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. If the correction in the *Roman de la Rose* was made by the same person, this proves that these two units were certainly together at the time during which this user made his remarks. The correction in the *Rose*, however, is very small, and it is unclear whether or not this was done by the same person. Because of this, I will for this purpose assume that this user only corrected the *Poire*. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. See ff. 22r, 48r, and 57r. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. On f. 70r. This is line 3477 in Fr. 12786 (‘Et dist qu’il imetroit consoil (son oeil) | Que entre li et bel acueil’), and line 3651 in the edition by Jules Croissandeau (‘Et dit qu’il gage bien un oeil | Qu’entre moi et puis Bel‑Accueil’). Jules Croissandeau (Pierre Marteau, pseud.). *Le Roman de la Rose par Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meung: Édition accompagnée d’une traduction en vers, précédée d’une introduction, Notices historiques et critiques; suivie de notes et d’un glossaire*, 1, Paris: Paul Daffis, 1878, p. 235. This correction may suggest that this user compared the text as copied in Fr. 12786 with the same text in another source. He may have been a corrector rather than a reader, although every corrector is also a reader in essence. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. ##  Les ix Joies Nostre Dame and Le Dit d’Aristote, see e.g.: Achille Jubinal. Œuvres Complètes de Rutebeuf, Trouvère du xiiie

*Siècle*, Paris: Paul Daffis, 1874, Vol. 2 pp. 152‑63; Vol. 2 pp. 93‑97 respectively.  [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. These words are found on the following ff.: 95r, 25r, 82v, 41r, and 25v. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Compare for example the deletions at the tops of ff. 76r and 76v, where the ink has been scratched off the parchment in different manners, the first in a very thorough way in which the top layer of the parchment was scraped off first diagonally and then again horizontally, and the ink has completely gone, whereas in the second example the ink is still visible, and it seems like a more blunt knife was used here. Whether either of these deletions was done by the scribe, is unknown, but it is unlikely that they both were. There are many examples of shorter deletions (one word or less) in the form of dotted lines, which were probably done by the scribe himself. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. There are, however, examples of commercial book production at various times in the Middle Ages and in various places across Europe, such as, famously, in thirteenth‑ and fourteenth‑century Paris (See for example: Mary A. Rouse; Richard H. Rouse. *Manuscripts and their Makers: Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris 1200-1500*, Turnhout:

Harvey Miller, 2000; Mary A. Rouse; Rouse, Richard H. ‘The Commercial Production of Manuscript Books in LateThirteenth‑Century and Early‑Fourteenth‑Century Paris’, in: Linda L. Brownrigg, *Medieval Book Production. Assessing the Evidence*, Los Altos Hills: Anderson‑Lovelace, 1990, p. 103‑115, but such production was not the norm. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. A nice example is the later user of the book who may have used the manuscript as a tool for language‑learning rather than for entertainment purposes. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. These more obscure texts cover topics on which perhaps fewer texts were written, particularly the lapidary and the dream treatise, and there may therefore have been fewer different texts and fewer exemplars to choose from when the intended owner wanted texts on these topics in the manuscript. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Mary Hobbs. *Early Seventeenth-Century Verse Miscellany Manuscripts*, Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1992, p. 13. The manuscript was copied by a single scribe, except for f. 52v, which was copied by another. N. R. Ker, ed. *Facsimile of British Museum MS Harley 2253*, in: Early English Text Society, Vol. 255, London: Oxford University Press, 1965. The two sections are inextricably attached on grounds of codicological evidence, and it is therefore certain that they are not two separate books that have later been bound together. Also see: Jason O’Rourke, ‘Imagining Book Production in Fourteenth‑Century Herefordshire: The Scribe of British Library, MS Harley 2253 and his “Organizing Principles”’, in: Stephen Kelly, ed.; John J. Thompson, ed. *Imagining the Book*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2005, p. 45‑60; Susanna Fein, ed. *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, Kalamazoo, 2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. See: Ker, 1965.  [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Elizabeth Eva Leach: ‘A Courtly Compilation: The Douce Chansonnier’, in: Deeming, Leach, p. 221‑46.  [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Other miscellanies that are similar to Fr. 12786 in the kinds of texts they transmit, are, e.g.: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fr. 25545 (fourteenth century); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fr. 15211 (fourteenth century); Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, 2872 (fourteenth century); London, British Library, Harley 978 (third quarter of the thirteenth century). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. A nice example is the abovementioned Harley 2253. Hobbs, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. See: Sylvia Huot. *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, e.g. p. 63‑75, 330‑332, 336. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. This is something that has happened in other manuscripts. A nice example is London, British Library, Egerton 274, in which music has been notated on blank staves several generations after the manuscript was made. See: Helen Deeming: ‘Preserving and RecyclingL Functional Multiplicity and Shifting Priorities in the Compilation and Continued Use of London, British Library, Egerton 274’, in: Deeming, Leach, p. 156‑158. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. See: Cesare Segre. *Li Bestiaires d’Amours: Di Maistre Richart de Fornival e Li Response du Bestiaire*, in: Documenti di

Filologia, 2, Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1957; Langlois, 1910.  [↑](#footnote-ref-52)