



Johannes Junge Ruhland

Ph.D. Student in French, admitted Autumn 2018

Bio

BIO

Hello!

I am a scholar of medieval literature in Old French, Old Occitan, and Franco-Italian, and I focus on literature from before c. 1350. I have gradually come to adopt a “manuscript-first” approach to medieval literature, as I try to understand the implications of reading from manuscripts. I am also the Assistant Director for the Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at Stanford (AY 22-23).

My PhD dissertation, titled *Thought Laboratories: Incongruence in Vernacular Multi-Text Manuscripts before 1350*, explores the affordances of manuscript-first approaches by developing incongruence as a critical category for the interpretation of multi-text manuscripts. Incongruence, which I define as the dissonance in theme, tone, or logic between two or more texts, has proven useful in at least two respects. First, it allows to bypass the scholarly habit of looking for coherence and unity in multi-text manuscripts, and proposes to focus on elements that resonate with widespread habits of dialectical thinking. Second, it offers an angle through which to consider textually and codicologically challenging codices. While caution is needed when examining composite manuscripts and when dealing with “miscellaneous” books, incongruence nonetheless provides a more varied range of approaches through which to understand how these compilations could be read as compilations of several texts. With the notion of “thought laboratories,” I describe one way in which incongruence seems to have been deployed: for the creation of sustained thought experiments on the part of readers. You can read a text-based attempt at developing this mechanism in my article, “The Challenge of Incongruence in Richard de Fournival’s *Bestiaire d’amour*” (*Exemplaria* 33.2).

A straight line connects my MA research, conducted at King’s College London, with my current work on manuscripts of history. Building on my PhD dissertation work on incongruence in historiographical multi-text manuscripts, I am now preparing an article and editing a volume of essays on “making history with manuscripts,” which consider the implications of reading history in manuscript codices—with illuminations, diagrams, layout, touch and sight, compilation, and adaptation impacting the readers’ encounter with historical narratives. A very early piece showcasing my thinking on the topic appears in “The Manuscript as Agent” (*New Medieval Literatures* 21), and more is forthcoming in “Voices on Parchment: Who Speaks in Historiographical Multi-Text Manuscripts?”

Lastly, my work on Richard de Fournival has led me onto debate literature as it appears in texts and especially manuscripts. In what I hope will become my first monograph, I will examine debate as a form that allows participants to deploy their thinking in set directions, and that therefore functions as a technology for thought. Whereas much scholarship has rightly emphasized that debates are governed by game-like rules that determine how participants are to engage—and event what they can say—I also think there is room to rethink what fixed forms enable in terms of personal involvement. A preliminary piece delineating the corpus of pre-1330 debate literature in texts and manuscripts is forthcoming under the title “The Practice of Debate in French Literature before Machaut.”

One of my favourite aspects of the PhD program is the possibility to teach. I have taught French language (novice through advanced), French literature, and German conversation, with more French literature courses to come. I value improvement over achievement, and I derive great satisfaction from working with my students towards reaching their learning goals. I am a certified tester with ACTFL.

Please visit my Academia.edu profile (link on the side) for a list of publications, presentations, and creative commons teaching materials, and drop me an email if you would like to discuss any of the above.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- SPICE award, VPGE Stanford (2022)
- James Baldwin Essay Prize 2022, France-Stanford Center for Interdisciplinary Studies (2022)
- Ric Weiland Graduate Fellowship, School of Humanities and Sciences, Stanford University (2021-2023)
- Access 2021 Scholarship, Rare Book School, Charlottesville, VA (2021)
- Graduate Student Grant, The Europe Center at Stanford University (2020)
- Mary Bennett Prize, King's College London (2017-2018)
- Sévigné Studentship, King's College London (2017-2018)
- Prix de la Fondation Hardt, Fondation Hardt pour l'étude de l'Antiquité classique, Vandoeuvres, Geneva, CH. (2013)

LINKS

- Academia: <https://stanford.academia.edu/JohannesJungeRuhland>