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Portable Scholasticism? The Intellectual Horizons of Gervase of Tilbury

Introduction

It is easy to lose one's bearings within a medieval encyclopaedia. It is all too often the kind of text which modern scholars mine for choice examples, quotations, references, without much consideration for the work as a holistic text. It is an unfortunate fate for works which might offer much more to the history of ideas. This article deals with one of those overlooked medieval "encyclopaedists", Gervase of Tilbury (c.1150-1220). It argues that Gervase's life and work are best understood as a point of exchange between the schools and courts of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Gervase repackaged and redeployed scholastic knowledge and scholastic authorities for a series of courtly audiences: in England, Sicily, and finally in Germany, at the court of Otto IV, Holy Roman Emperor. A stint in the service of the Archbishop of Rheims also brought him close to the French royal court of Louis VII. Both Gervase and his greatest work—the *Otia Imperialia*—represent a distinctive kind of "portable" scholasticism.[1] A figure like Gervase, armed with good connections, a scholastic pedigree, and knowledge ranging across law, the arts, and theology, could prove a useful royal servant. The content of scholastic learning could be adapted and abridged in order to speak to pressing courtly concerns, but scholastic principles were never totally simplified or ignored.

Gervase is best known for the *Otia Imperialia*, a work dedicated to the emperor Otto IV.[2] It describes the history and marvels of Europe, North Africa, and regions of Asia, stretching as far as the Indian Ocean and Caspian Sea. It has been described as "a kind of compendium of universal knowledge… pleasantly seasoned with folklore and universal

1 The title of this article is inspired by, and plays on, Julia M. H. Smith's "Portable Christianity: Relics in the Medieval West (c. 700-1200)," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 181 (2012): 143-167.

2 Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia: Recreation for an Emperor*, ed. and trans. S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002). Hereafter *Otia*.

anecdote."[3] The *Otia* is not a *speculum principis*, though it bears some connection to that tradition, seeking both to instruct and to entertain, but with a much more expansive horizon than many other examples of this genre.[4] The *Otia* is notable not only for its ambition and vast scope, but also for its intended recipient. Otto IV, Holy Roman Emperor from 1209 to 1215, was the only member of the Welf dynasty to hold that title.[5] Gervase served Otto as Marshal of Arles, and had almost certainly attended his imperial coronation in 1209. This means the *Otia* offers us access to an unusual and ephemeral political reality in the early thirteenth-century empire. Gervase himself was a markedly mobile subject. Born in England, he achieved the title of *magister* in law at Bologna; he served Henry II and the Young King Henry, travelled to Sicily where he worked for the island's Norman rulers, before arriving at Otto's court.[6] Gervase's mobility, it must be emphasised, was not purely a product of his intellectual capacities, but also his social position—some degree of wealth was a prerequisite for young men studying in the schools. Gervase's family was well connected, close to that of the Earl of Salisbury. Later in his life, he married into the elite of Provençal society, an achievement unlikely without both political and personal pedigree.[7]

Despite all these claims to distinction, Gervase's writing has largely been left to the folklorists, who have primarily been interested in using Gervase's text to access the stories

3 James R. Caldwell, "The Autograph Manuscript of Gervase of Tilbury (Vatican, Vat. Lat. 933)," *Scriptorium* 11:1 (1957): 87.

4 Cf. Egbert Türk, *Nugae curialium: Le règne d'Henri II Plantegenêt (1145-1189) et l'éthique politique* (Geneva: Droz, 1976).

5 Gerd Althoff, "Otto IV.–Woran scheiterte der welfische Traum vom Kaisertum?," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 43:1 (2009): 199-214.

6 For a biography, H. G. Richardson, "Gervase of Tilbury," *History* 46 (1961): 102-14. There is a continuing controversy as to whether Gervase of Tilbury is to be identified with the author of the Ebstorf world map: see Armin Wolf, "The Ebstorf Mappamundi and Gervase of Tilbury: The Controversy Revisited," *Imago Mundi* 64:1 (2012): 1-27.

7 See S. Banks, "Tilbury, Gervase of (b. 1150s, d. in or after 1222)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10572, last accessed January 2023. I am grateful to the journal's reviewers for their suggestions on this point.

circulating orally in medieval societies.[8] The *Otia* has been viewed as a storehouse of colorful tales, rather than a work with a fixed frame or narrative thread. This may explain some of the neglect. What, for example, should a historian of the twelfth-century kingdom of Norman Sicily make of the following tale from Book II of the *Otia*? Gervase recounts the story of Nicholas Pipe, a man from Apulia who had lived during the reign of Roger II of Sicily (r. 1130-1154). Nicholas Pipe belonged to the world of "marvels" because he made his home under the sea. Sea creatures did not harm him, and he was friendly with the sailors, warning them of storms. He explored the depths and reported back to those on land that "under the sea there were mountains and valleys, woods, plains, and acorn-bearing trees."[9]

Taken on its own, such a passage is difficult to parse. Into what kind of history does this story fit? What—if anything—can such an anecdote tell us about the twelfth-century Hauteville kingdom of Sicily and Southern Italy? More generally, what can be said to categorize a work that runs to over 400 pages of Latin in its modern edition, with no obvious equivalent in modern genres of writing? Book I of the *Otia* addresses "creation," covering the events of Genesis from the beginnings of the Earth to Noah and Ark. Book II describes the different parts of the world and its "divisions" by regions and cities. The third book aims, with no less ambition, "to present the marvels of every province to our discerning listener."[10] This problem of vast scope is compounded by the diversity of sources. Gervase draws heavily on classical writings (Ovid, Pliny), on the Church Fathers, on early medieval chronicles (Paul the Deacon, Fredegar), and the work of his near-contemporaries, particularly the twelfth-century theologian Peter Comestor, the author of a digest of biblical history. The sheer scope

8 e. g. R. C. Cox, "Tarn Wadling and Gervase of Tilbury's 'Laikibrait'," *Folklore* 85:2 (1974): 128-131; see also Leonid S. Chekin, "Elements of the Rational Method in Gervase of Tilbury's Cosmology and Geography," *Centaurus* 28 (1985): 209-17.

9 *Otia*, II.12, 333.

10 *Otia*, preface to Book III, 557.

of Gervase's interests makes it all the more difficult to weigh the significance of the text. We fail to grapple with Gervase because he contains multitudes.[11]

As this article argues, the *Otia Imperialia* is most productively treated by locating it within a particular intellectual milieu. Gervase adapted the authorities and the distinctive textual forms of the schools for a courtly audience. He was not the first scholar to attempt such a "translation" of knowledge, but Gervase's experience of multiple courts makes the text a particularly distinctive artefact. Gervase balanced a discussion of the created world with the theological themes that were most valuable—politically and theologically—to his patrons. This was a balance that could only be struck by an author who knew his way around both the schools and the courts. That same combination of scholastic knowledge and courtly concerns is evident in Gervase's other surviving work, a commentary on the Lord's Prayer, a text which borrows metaphors of courtly entertainment and largesse to make a set of sophisticated theological arguments.

The sole scholarly exception to the above-lamented neglect of Gervase is Edward Peters' discussion of Gervase as a jurist.[12] Focusing on Gervase's training in Bologna, Peters has read the *Otia* for its comments on the relationship between temporal and spiritual powers, composed at a moment (1214-15) when the relationship between Otto IV and Innocent III was extremely uneasy. Peters characterizes Gervase as "a firm, if respectful dualist," who, across the three books of the *Otia*, asserts that *regnum* and *sacerdotium* are two separate entities, and that God has appointed a governor to each.[13] This argument—one pleasing to

11 One further consideration here may be the linguistic limitations of Anglophone scholars, who have shown little interest in Otto IV, compared to his successor as emperor, Frederick II.

12 Edward Peters, "Another Canonist Heard From: Gervase of Tilbury's Kaiserspiegel for Otto IV," in *Canon Law, Religion, and Politics: Liber Amicorum Robert Somerville*, ed. Uta-Renate Blumenthal, Anders Winroth, and Peter Landau (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 215-27. See also Peters, "The Lady Vanishes: Gervase of Tilbury on Heresy and Wonders," in *Mind Matters: Studies of Medieval and Early Modern Intellectual History in Honour of Marcia Colish*, ed. Cary J. Nederman, Nancy Van Deusen, and E. Ann Matter (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 171-90.

13 Peters, "Another Canonist Heard From," 219.

Otto's imperial ears—stated that the papacy did not possess imperial power, and that Constantine's donation had never transferred such authority to Rome. Peters also detected in the *Otia* an attempt to counsel Otto to come to some compromise with Innocent III, a relationship which had broken down after Otto's invasion of Sicily. Peters' discussion is compelling because it recognizes that the *Otia* was the work of a man trained at Bologna, and that even a work of "mere" entertainment could be used as a vehicle for the examination of weighty legal and political questions. Peters performed the valuable service of illuminating the legal context for Gervase and the immediate political context of the *Otia*. This was a moment of significant imperial reckoning. But there is much more to be said. Gervase did not just draw on his legal training, but a much wider body of learning from the liberal arts curriculum—the subjects preparatory to higher study, namely grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, astronomy, mathematics, geometry, and music. This learning was repurposed and reframed for a courtly audience. In this reframing lay the originality of Gervase's thought. What follows is intended to put Gervase in his proper intellectual setting.

This article—like the *Otia* itself—is divided into three parts. It begins by addressing the Sicilian context for Gervase's writing, arguing that Gervase's time in Sicily may have provided an important dry run for some of the arguments he offered to Otto IV. It then moves to discuss the wider scholastic context of the *Otia*, and how we can see Gervase in dialogue with some of the fundamental texts of the later twelfth-century school curriculum, redeploying them for a courtly audience. This, in turn, allows us to think about the underlying intellectual and theological purpose of the text, moving it beyond an amalgam of marvels and interesting anecdotes. Finally, I address Gervase's commentary on the Lord's Prayer: a work which helps us understand Gervase himself, and his distinct and compelling combination of scholastic and courtly learning. After Gervase had brought "theology" to the courts through the *Otia*, he then brought courtly metaphors into his theology through this commentary.

The Sicilian context

Gervase's path from England to Sicily was not an unusual one by the standards of the twelfth century, given the well-established links between the two nations.[14] Soon after 1180, Gervase had entered the service of the Young King Henry, son of Henry II of England and heir apparent to the Plantagenet throne. Gervase composed a (now lost) book of courtly entertainments for the Young King, the *Liber Facetiarium*.[15] On the death of the Young King in 1183, Gervase first entered the employ of William, Archbishop of Rheims, and from there moved to Sicily, and the court of William II (r.1166-89). His experience of the English court may well have offered some recommendation, as William II had married Joan, the daughter of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, in 1177.

Historians have had little to say about Gervase's role in the Norman Sicilian kingdom. His modern editors pass over it quickly; even Evelyn Jamison, whose knowledge of Anglo-Normans abroad in the Sicilian kingdom was unsurpassed, did not find much of interest.[16] But we miss a great deal if we skip over Gervase's time in Sicily. The *Otia* can allow us to reconstruct, in some small part, the courtly world of late twelfth-century Sicily under its Hauteville (Norman) ruler, William II. It may also help us appreciate why the former servant of a Norman Sicilian king should be so useful to a German Welf emperor.

We do not know exactly *how* Gervase served William II; no independent record of his time in Sicily has survived beyond what is recorded in the *Otia*. We can make reasonable assumptions, based on the biographies of those who served in Sicily and more generally

14 C. H. Haskins, "England and Sicily in the Twelfth Century," *English Historical Review* 26 (1911): 641-665; Graham A. Loud, "The Kingdom of Sicily and the Kingdom of England, 1066–1266," *History* 88 (2003): 540-567. Indeed, Gervase's connections to the English court must also have served as a recommendation to Otto IV, whose mother, Matilda, was the oldest daughter of Henry II. Moreover, Otto had relied on the support of Richard I, his uncle, when seeking the German throne.

15 *Otia*, preface, 15.

16 Evelyn M. Jamison, *The Sicilian Norman Kingdom in the Mind of Anglo-Norman Contemporaries* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1938).

about the value of an education in the schools in the later twelfth century. Gervase had legal training but is unlikely to have acted as a lawyer for the king—at least not in a full time or fixed role. Gervase's legal learning is intermittently evident in the *Otia*, for instance when he breaks away from a narrative of scriptural history to explain how Cain's killing of Abel (Genesis iv) might provide judicial precedent for punishing those presumed to be guilty, citing both canon and civil law texts in support of this point.[17] More generally, a legal education would speak to administrative competencies; a foundation in the arts would have given him the ability to express himself through the common cultural language of the classics. Gervase was an advisor, a counsellor, able to write for particular circumstances and audiences. He was well-rewarded for his service; William II granted him villa at Nola, in the Campania, so he could avoid spending the summers in the heat of Palermo.[18]

All medieval princes sought entertainment and diversion, but Sicilian kings, in particular, worked to present their court as a centre of intellectual excellence. The anonymous *Epistola ad Petrum*, a piece written lamenting the dissolution of the Sicilian kingdom after the death of William II, provides valuable evidence of this Sicilian self-regard.[19] It describes the court in Palermo its pomp in the later twelfth century. It depicts a world where the powerful of the realm would be summoned to any of the royal palaces of the capital to discuss public affairs with the king; where the insight of their counsel was expected to match the refined beauty of the surroundings.[20] The great men of Norman Sicily fashioned themselves as patrons of learning, and did not restrict themselves to a single field or topic. Maio of Bari, the chief counsellor to William I, father of William II, had patronized the

17 *Otia*, I.19, 105.

18 *Otia*, III.12, 581.

19 For the Latin text: *Epistola ad Petrum de desolatione Siciliae*, ed. Edoardo D'Angelo (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 2014).

20 D'Angelo, *Epistola ad Petrum*, 180. Similar claims in praise of William II's learning are made by Arabic sources, e.g. the account of the traveller Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. Roland Broadhurst (London: J. Cape, 1952), pp. 340-1.

translation activities of Henry Aristippus, led courtly debates on the nature of law, and composed a scriptural commentary of his own.[21] Admiral Eugenius, another leading figure at the court in Palermo, composed Greek poetry which used classical philosophy to reflect on his experiences of serving Sicilian kings.[22] Gervase did not hold such high office, but he nevertheless embodied the same model: public intellectual accomplishment was one facet of political distinction. The author of the *Epistola* gives another glimpse of the premium placed on intellectual display when describing the education of William II's sister, Constance. She was "brought up from her first cradle for many years in the riches of your [Sicily's] delights, educated and moulded by your instruction and manners, later left to enrich foreigners with your wealth."[23] Gervase must have slotted easily into this courtly and urbane world, at least on the Latin side of it, while others at the court provided literary and philosophical entertainments in Greek and Arabic.

An author's biography does not, of course, determine content in any simple or straightforward way. And yet there is value in asking what Gervase gathered from his time in Sicily and Southern Italy. Commentary on *Otia* has often concentrated on the material focused on the region of Arles, where Gervase settled in the early thirteenth century. But the landscape, politics, and "marvels" of the Sicilian kingdom make a good showing across the three books of the *Otia*. This material includes an account of how King Arthur had not died but lived in a palace in a cavern under Etna, suffering from the wounds he sustained in his final battle. From his dwelling under the volcano, the hidden king sent gifts to the bishop of the nearby city of Catania.[24] For Gervase, the story may have held a particular interest, as

21 D. J. A. Matthew, "Maio of Bari's Commentary on the Lord's Prayer," in *Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lesley Smith and Benedicta Ward (London: Hambledon, 1992), 119-44.

22 Evelyn M. Jamison, *Admiral Eugenius of Sicily: His Life and Work* (London: British Academy, 1957).

23 D'Angelo, *Epistola ad Petrum*, 180. For the English translation, see Graham A. Loud and Thomas Wiedermann, *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily by 'Hugo Falcandus'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 255.

24 *Otia*, II.12, 335.

Arthur had made the same journey as he had, from the British Isles to the island of Sicily. If this story had been related at the Norman court in twelfth-century Palermo, it might also have entertained William II's English wife, Joan. Gervase also repeated the claim that Southern Italy was the resting place of the poet Virgil, adding a further detail of his own. Virgil's bones were so proudly guarded by the people of Naples that they refused to let an English *magister* remove them, even though he had a royal warrant to do so.[25] More generally, the *Otia* praises for the eleventh-century founders of the Norman Sicilian kingdom, Robert Guiscard and Roger, who "hounded the lazy, cowardly Lombards to utter destruction, achieving their ends alternatively by the sword and by guile, and brought Apulia, Calabria, Sicily and Upper Africa under their control."[26] In the *Otia*, a work for a German emperor, the inclusion of detailed Sicilian material made strategic sense. Otto's predecessor as emperor, Henry VI, had conquered the Norman Kingdom in 1194, adding King of Sicily to his titles. Otto hoped to claim that title too, and sought to advance his interests down through the south of the Italian peninsula, being crowned King of Italy in Milan in 1208. Otto's ambitions further south were obstructed by the fact that Henry's son, Frederick, was in possession of the Kingdom of Sicily, and Frederick himself under the guardianship of Innocent III. Nonetheless, Otto aspired to rulership of both northern and southern Italy, and the island of Sicily.

In this sense, the *Otia* performed the basic functions of informing a ruler about the distinctive features of one of his territories, albeit a disputed one. It is more than likely that these passages drew on notes that Gervase had been making throughout his time in Sicily; one might very well suggest that Gervase had once intended to prepare a similar book of entertainments for a Sicilian ruler. If the Young King of England received a *Liber*

25 *Otia*, II.112, 803.

26 *Otia*, II.19, 463.

Facetiarum as a lasting memorial to a distinguished court, might not William II of Sicily have expected the same?

There is much material in the *Otia* that might well have had a Norman Sicilian origin, which was subsequently rewritten (though perhaps only lightly) for presentation to Otto. The *Otia*'s critique of the Staufen emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (r.1155-90), for example, would have been music to the ears of either a Norman Hauteville ruler in the 1180s, or a Welf emperor in the early thirteenth century. The Norman rulers of Sicily had been nervous of Frederick I's continuing ambitions to invade the kingdom and keep it for himself. Otto IV had contended with Frederick's son, Philip, for the German throne, and his claim to Sicily was contested by Frederick's grandson, the future Frederick II. The *Otia* does not present Frederick I as the militarily dominant and politically-skilled figure we encounter in other contemporary Latin sources. Indeed, Frederick comes off rather badly in the *Otia*, his lustre tarnished: dismissed as a ruler who was unable to realize his imperial ambitions in Southern Italy and who could only make peace with the Sicilians by arranging a marriage between another of his sons, Henry, and Constance, daughter of the Norman ruler Roger II.[27] Gervase's "German" material must have needed some refashioning, but not a great deal; there was much held in common between William II and Otto.

Otto IV may also have gained *practically* from Gervase's knowledge of southern Italy. Sicily was a problem for Otto: his initial recognition by the papacy had been based on the agreement that Otto would not lay claim to Sicily. Otto's invasion of southern Italy in 1210 undid this agreement.[28] As well as doing severe damage to his relationship with Innocent III, leading to his excommunication, Otto was now faced with the challenge of legitimizing his rulership over the kingdom, extending his patronage in order to gain

27 *Otia*, II.19, 465.

28 Paul Oldfield, "Otto IV and Southern Italy," *Archivio Normanno-Svevo* 1 (2009): 9-30.

recognition in his newly-acquired territories.[29] Peters has argued that this contested relationship between Innocent III and Otto IV made Gervase's dualist arguments particularly important. Otto's supporters emphasized that imperial dignity was not confined by papal claims; the papacy could not command Otto as it wished.[30] What should be recognized, however, is that Gervase's time in Sicily in the 1180s may have prepared him well to articulate such an argument at the imperial court in the 1210s. The experience of serving William II might well have offered Gervase considerable insight into how a ruler could assert his independence from certain aspects of papal authority.

Delimiting papal claims to authority and praising the independence of royal dignity must have been a necessary position for any legally-trained man at the Norman Sicilian court. All twelfth-century Sicilian rulers asserted a considerable degree of independence from papal control. This was seen most starkly in their rights over the Sicilian church. Such claims to independence ultimately derived from Urban II's grant of quasi-legatine powers to Roger I in 1098; subsequent Sicilian kings wielded this right of "apostolic legateship" fiercely. The distinctive Sicilian arguments made for independent royal control over the church—especially as asserted by Roger II—were widely known and criticized across Latin Europe.[31]

We know that Gervase, a *magister* in law, trained in Bologna, took a significant interest in such questions of the relationship between spiritual and temporal authority as they played out in Otto IV's territories in the second decade of the thirteenth century. We might reasonably assume that the legal claims of Sicilian kings and their royal rights formed an important intellectual background for Gervase in the 1180s. The experience of Norman Sicily might have either formed or confirmed some of those strongly dualist views. Otto's

29 See Oldfield, "Otto IV."

30 Peters, "Another Canonist Heard From."

31 More generally, see Graham A. Loud, "Royal Control of the Church in the Twelfth-Century Kingdom of Sicily," *Studies in Church History* 18 (1982): 147-59.

complaints against the papacy in the 1210s were not identical in substance to those of Sicilian kings in the twelfth century, but both disputes derived (like others in twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Europe) from arguments about the proper delineation of papal powers.

By the time Gervase had established himself in Sicily, the more violent aspects of the conflict between papacy and Norman Hautevilles had been settled, but Norman kings still guarded their rights jealously. The relationship had been calmed by the Treaty of Benevento (1156); under the terms of that agreement papal legations could be sent to Apulia and Calabria on the southern Italian mainland, but legates coming to the island of Sicily required explicit royal permission.[32] The dispute between the rulers of Sicily and the papacy was one of the most significant arguments about the extent of papal legal authority in twelfth-century Europe, and a long-running and long-remembered dispute.[33] It is inconceivable that Gervase, trained in jurisprudence in northern Italy, and a man whose success derived from his utility to rulers, would have taken no interest in this contest. Any service to William II would have required Gervase to understand the way in which Sicilian kings interacted with their most important northern neighbour, the papal states. Gervase did not just attend William in Palermo, but travelled across southern Italy, where questions of royal authority were more acute. Gervase was a *magister* in law at a time when Sicily did not have its own law school; legal expertise in Sicily was imported, mostly from northern Italy.[34] This must have imbued Gervase with some intellectual authority. He may well have seen a copy of the Treaty of Benevento; at least one copy was kept by the Norman kings, presumably in the administrative

32 L. Weiland, *Monumenta Germaniae historica, Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum*, vol. 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1893), cc.8-9, 588-90.

33 Loud, "Royal Control," 150.

34 For the legal context, see Kenneth Pennington, "The Birth of the Ius Commune: King Roger II's Legislation," *Rivista internazionale di diritto commune* 17 (2006): 23-60, and Paul Oldfield, "The Kingdom of Sicily and the Early University Movement," *Viator* 40, no. 2 (2009): 135-150.

centre of Palermo.[35] We might speculate that further copies circulated within the kingdom, and that Gervase could be expected to know the substance of the Norman claims.

Moreover, throughout his reign, William II asserted a particularly elevated vision of kingship. This is evident in his most important construction, the cathedral of Monreale, located just outside Palermo. The cathedral was a place of significant royal ceremony, which Gervase—a distinguished royal servant—must almost certainly have visited.[36] Begun in 1174, Monreale continued to assert Sicilian claims to elevation above other rulers, and the intertwining of royal and spiritual powers. Its founding documents recognized that the church would be subject both the pope and to the Norman king in his role as apostolic legate.[37] Rosa Bacile has persuasively argued that these assertions were also made good in the iconography of the building, where the mosaic scheme focused on kingship and underscored the Old Testament figures who had commanded both royal and spiritual authority; culminating in the eastern arch of the church, depicting Melchizdek, the pre-figuration of Christ, who united royal and priestly powers, being both *rex* and *sacerdos*.[38] Other panels showed William II being crowned directly by God, in much the same way as his grandfather, Roger II, had been depicted.

Because we know so little about Gervase's life beyond what is revealed in passing in the *Otia*, the foregoing suggestions about his Sicilian sojourn must be no more than speculative. But this was a kingdom in which there was plentiful scope for scholastic arguments and authorities to fuse with courtly agendas. At the very least, Gervase's time in the Norman Sicilian kingdom must have proved useful in exposing him to the political

35 Weiland, c.13, 589.

36 Monreale is mentioned in Gervase's list of metropolitan sees and their suffragans, *Otia*, II.9, 283, although this simply indicates that Gervase was working from a recent copy of the *Provinciale Romanum*.

37 Carlo A. Garufi, *Catalogo illustrato del tabulario di S. Maria Nuova di Monreale* (Palermo, 1902), 10.

38 Rosa Bacile, "Stimulating Perceptions of Kingship: Royal Imagery in the Cathedral of Monreale and in the Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio in Palermo," *Al-Masāq* 16:1 (2004): 36.

demonstration of conceptual arguments about the separateness of royal authority from papal power and royal dignity. It may also have provided him with an enhanced conceptual vocabulary when it came to arguments about the dignity of kingship. Though we cannot quantify the value of Gervase's Sicilian experience, it is altogether unlikely that he discovered his dualism for the first time in Arles, when he came to write the *Otia*.

Scholastic building blocks

The density and diversity of the sources for the *Otia* can make it difficult to see any underlying framework or argument within the text. But Gervase's sources are in themselves worth considering for what they reveal about the depth of his knowledge. They extend far beyond a set of narrowly 'legal' interests. Some are the core texts of the twelfth-century school curriculum; the works which would have provided an introduction to organising information about the created world: Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, Isidore's *Etymologiae*, Honorius of Autun's *De imagine mundi*. Others, however, are rather further away from the standard school curriculum: a quotation from Ralph Niger's now-lost verse commentary on Aristotle's *Topica* and *Elenchi*[39] sit alongside multiple references to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. I do not propose to list each of Gervase's sources individually, but to suggest what these manifold influences and borrowing might reveal about Gervase's understanding of intellectual order, and his connection to the broader intellectual horizons of late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century scholasticism.

While this first book, in particular, is reliant on the twelfth-century theologian Peter Comestor, Gervase selects his material carefully rather than copying slavishly.[40] Gervase uses Peter's paraphrase of scriptural history—the *Historia Scholastica*—as a source to be

39 *Otia*, II.3, 187. Binns and Banks suggest Gervase may be confusing Ralph Niger with Ralph of Flaix.

40 For example, Gervase recombines the order of several passages of Comestor, as well as combining it with other texts. I.17 runs through Comestor's Genesis in the following order: c.24, 13, 87, 7. I.20 takes Gen. 28, 37, 41, 29, 44, 47, 39, 47, 46, 39, 40, 38.

combined and reconstituted, according to the argument he wishes to draw out. This is not, in itself, surprising: Gervase, scholastically-trained, utilizes Comestor like any other authority in the scholastic pantheon—to be taken apart, borrowed from, built upon. This method is testament to the continuing influence of his scholastic training: a flexible attitude to one's authorities, and a creative recombination.[41] This is evident, for example, in the penultimate chapter of Book I. Here Gervase is broadly following a narrative provided in c.6 of Genesis and cc.32-3 of Comestor's commentary on Genesis, which describe God's decision to punish wicked humanity by sending a flood, and his instructions to Noah for building a boat to survive the devastation.[42] But Gervase "interrupts" Peter Comestor's account of Noah's Ark in order to explore the significance of one of the birds mentioned in the biblical account: Gervase discusses the anatomy of the dove—from its mouth to its entrails. Here Gervase takes some considerable liberties of interpretation, offering the dove as an image of the imperial household and the division of offices within the household.[43] By contrast, a more conventional or traditional exegesis would suggest the dove as a symbol of scripture, the Holy Spirit, or even the Church itself.[44]

Much of Book II of the *Otia* deals with the division of the world, extending as far as India to the East, Libya to the South, and Norway to the North. Partly for this reason, Gervase's recent editors characterize the whole work as a "geographical compilation."[45] It would, however, be a mistake to think of this as a work of geography in any modern sense, because the divisions which interest Gervase are primarily historical and often

41 More broadly, Gervase's attitude here parallels the "flexible" approach taken by other scholastic masters to Comestor's *Historia*. See Mark J. Clark, *The Making of the Historia Scholastica, 1150-1200* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2015).

42 Peter Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, PL.198.1082-3.

43 *Otia*, I.24, 157.

44 e.g. the *Glossa ordinaria* on Genesis viii.11, incorporating Alcuin's discussion of the dove, PL.113.110A, and on Leviticus i.14, quoting Isidore, PL.113.301A.

45 *Otia*, xlvi.

ecclesiological. Though it has not been recognized, Gervase's framework here has much in common with Augustine's *De civitate Dei*. At a general level, Gervase, like Augustine, is interested in cataloguing the rise, fall and progression of kingdoms, and the relationship between human history and sacred history. Such an idea can only be sketched on a very broad canvas. Gervase also develops a specifically "Augustinian" set of arguments about miracles and marvels.

One of Gervase's key concerns in Book II is to map the historical spread of the Church over time. His narrative explains how different rulers supported or retarded the spread of Christian doctrine, how rulers were converted and martyred.[46] It is the spread of the Church which requires Gervase to range so widely in geography. He catalogues the cities of Asia "which once belonged to the priests and high priests of the pagans," but which are now seats of episcopal power.[47] From there, Gervase moves to Europe, offering a history of its bishoprics and archbishoprics; here he acknowledges that the quality of his information is better, for knowledge of the history of Christianity in Europe is *certior*, *familiarior*.[48] For example, Narbonne has the oldest church on the northern shores of the Mediterranean; it was founded by disciples driven out of Judea, and Martha and Mary Magdalene were present at its foundation.[49] The central prison of the Roman empire was once to be found in Vienne, where Pilate was held after being condemned by Tiberius.[50] Calabria has four metropolitans, Sicily three, Denmark, Norway and Sweden have one each.[51] The material here is not unique to Gervase; he is drawing on a version of the *Provinciale Romanum*, a papal list of bishoprics,[52]

46 e.g. *Otia*, II.16, 389 on the Goths and Arianism.

47 *Otia*, II.4, 217.

48 *Otia*, II.7, 237, and II.9, 273, respectively.

49 *Otia*, II.10, 295.

50 *Otia*, II.10, 301.

51 *Otia*, II.10, 283-5.

supplemented by information found in Orosius, Jerome's *Chronica*, and its continuation by Prosper of Aquitaine.

What gives the *Otia* coherence and purpose is an interest in the unspooling of sacred history over long periods of time. Geography is charted through its relationship to ecclesiastical sees. This interest in sacred history might, perhaps, seem unremarkable in a typical thirteenth-century monastic chronicle. It is rather more striking in a work written by an ostensibly "secular" figure writing for an imperial audience. Indeed, one might wonder why a list of bishoprics would provide the best way for Otto IV (or any ruler) to understand the geography of the world. But this framework also provided something else of utility to Gervase: a mechanism for explaining how quickly one dynasty might fall and another might rise in its place. Ecclesiastical history and the location of sees provides a permanence and order which kingly histories cannot.

Gervase's explains his work is not a particular kingdom but what he describes as "successive kingdoms" (*succedentium regnorum*) as they have existed across place and time (*per loca et tempora descriptione*).[53] This proves useful to Gervase on two levels. First, it allows him to explain how the city of Rome might lose all its claims to power and authority; there is nothing fixed or permanent about its power.[54] Such a view might happily work to undermine papal claims about ancient authority rooted in historical tradition. Secondly, just as a long view of history could explain how Rome (as a city and focus of authority) had met its demise and how monarchical authority had passed from Adam to Noah to Alexander to Augustus,[55] it might also have the effect of handily explaining how a new Welf empire might be raised up—how authority might descend to a new dynasty.

52 For the *Provinciale*, see Jean Richard, "Évêchés titulaires et missionnaires dans le Provinciale romanae ecclesiae," *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome* 61:1 (1949): 227-236.

53 *Otia*, preface to Book III, 557.

54 e.g. *Otia*, II.16, 395.

55 *Otia*, I.10, 65-7.

The *Otia* also contains some specific parallels to Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, which suggest how the text may have informed Gervase's thought beyond providing a general blueprint for the rise and fall of kingdoms. Book I of the *Otia* concludes with an account of how Noah and his family departed from the Ark and the theological significance of the rainbow; Book II begins with a description of how the world was divided between the sons of Noah and their descendants. This distinction mirrors exactly the split between books fifteen and sixteen of *De civitate Dei*: book fifteen concludes with Noah and the Ark; book sixteen then continues by recounting a history of kings of Israel. This is, needless to say, not where Genesis or Peter Comestor conclude; but for Augustine it provides an obvious break between different kinds of rulership—the world before and after the Deluge.

Gervase's "Augustinian" concerns are, finally and most explicitly, reflected in the third book, which begins with Gervase's concern to define the relationship between a miracle and a marvel.[56] He criticizes his contemporaries who confuse the two categories. A miracle (*miracula*) is something which is preternatural (*preter naturam*) and displays the workings of divine power, such as the virgin birth or the raising of Lazarus from the dead. A marvel (*mirabilium*) stands in contrast to this: it is something which is natural but which lies beyond the human ability to explain. Gervase insists on beginning from a proper understanding of categories. His thought on this point is carefully organized: he explains that things which are unusual or novel (*novitates*) can be thought so according to four different categories: their originality, their recentness, their rarity, their strangeness. It is hard to resist seeing an Augustinian underpinning here, given that so much of *De civitate Dei* is concerned with the correct definition of miracles, and explaining why those events which pagans claimed to be miracles were not so.[57]

56 *Otia*, preface to Book III, 559.

57 For example, Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb (Stuttgart, 1981), iv.19, iv.26, vii.35, viii.16.

Gervase's modern editors have argued that Gervase presents his marvels in no particular order.[58] Yet Gervase chooses to begin with a set of Augustinian marvels and then develop them with examples from his own time. The first six marvels discussed in Book III—the loadstone, the salt of Agrigento, the asbestos stone, the fig tree of Egypt, the apples of the Pentapolis, the stone which waxes with the moon—are taken directly from book 21 of *De civitate Dei*. Gervase's discussion of the loadstone concludes with a long quotation from Augustine, arguing that while miracles are beyond the human capacity to understand or reproduce, that does not make them untrue.[59] Any reader (or listener) who recognized the set of examples taken from Augustine would have understood Gervase's work as one of extension and emulation.

Gervase explains the marvellous qualities of the salt of Agrigento (Sicily), which repeats the description provided by Augustine in *De civitate Dei*.[60] The salt is unusual because it has "the remarkable property of dissolving when salt normally solidifies, while it solidifies when it is natural for salt to dissolve." If thrown onto a fire the salt dissolves, but in water, "it crackles as if it were in a fire."[61] Gervase then extends this list, adding the salt of Cardona (Spain), so hard it cannot be scratched or cut by a knife, and the salt of Droitwich (England), produced from water wells which are salty from December to June, but which are sweet for the rest of the year.[62] While not every marvel in Book III is taken from Augustine, the miracles in *De civitate Dei* provide the starting point, and the argument to which Gervase returns. Gervase is offering an extension, a supplement, and a proof of Augustine's premise. This can be observed throughout the book; Gervase begins a chapter with an unusual feature

58 *Otia*, lxii.

59 *Otia*, III.1, 563-5.

60 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, xxi.5.

61 *Otia*, III.2, 565.

62 *Otia*, III.2, 565.

noted in another chronicle, but then offers to add to the marvel with "something even more marvellous we saw with our own eyes."[63]

Gervase's "marvels" are united under a common framework, premised on a thorough reading of *De civitate Dei*. "If anyone asks the meaning of these wonders of which one so often hears, I reply with the words of Augustine, that most blessed investigator of all questions; he says that the whole matter should be referred to the mysteries of divine justice."[64] Throughout the text, Gervase underlines the point that though he personally cannot understand the operation of such marvels, nonetheless they do occur and must be held to be real. Whereas Augustine's imagined interlocutors were pagans who tried to cast doubt on Christian truth, Gervase's interlocutors are mostly Christians,[65] but Christians who, by blurring the difference between miracle and marvel, or taking neither category seriously, had misconstrued their own place in the created world. Gervase counters this by providing a historical framework for understanding both miracles and marvels: just as there are patterns to the successions of kingdoms, so the marvels of the present day can find their analogues in earlier examples. Thinking of Gervase as being "in conversation" with Augustine, as continuing from his models also helps to account for the scope of the *Otia*. This is not merely copious for the sake of being so, or in pursuit of "encyclopaedic" goals; it is a deliberate expansion upon a fundamental *auctoritas*, an updating and emulation for the thirteenth century.

The Lord's Prayer

63 *Otia*, III.90, 737.

64 *Otia*, III.86, 725. Gervase is here referring to *De civitate Dei* xxv.23 and viii.16.

65 Cf. his comments about Albigensian heretics, *Otia*, I.2, 31.

I turn finally to Gervase's commentary on the Lord's Prayer, which survives today in only a single manuscript in Hereford Cathedral Library.[66] It was a work of Gervase's later years, written in the early 1220s, most likely after he entered a house of Premonstratensian canons. The commentary itself was presented as a gift to the college of canons at Marseilles.[67] Gervase begins by noting that it is Provençal custom to invite neighbours to a feast on major festival days; unable to do that, he has composed a commentary to honour his brothers.

The commentary is Gervase's only surviving theological work; he tells us he wrote both a *Life* of Antony and a *Life* of the Virgin, but these are lost.[68] To my knowledge, the commentary on the Lord's Prayer has received no academic attention whatsoever. Perhaps this is because it does not fit any of the standard models for twelfth- and thirteenth-century scriptural commentary. As it is not a work of the schools, it has not been noticed by historians of scholastic thought. What the commentary demonstrates, however, is Gervase's considerable knowledge of scholastic theology and scholastic models, even if he chooses to diverge from those models at different points in his writing. The commentary further breaks down any idea of hard and fast divisions between scholastic theology and "lay" religious practices. Gervase took a passage which was often the subject of quite technical and abstract scholastic discussion and reimagined it as a vehicle for devotion beyond the schools. He preserved some aspects of the technical prowess (and doctrinal rectitude) of scholastic theology, while serving up a more "accessible" reading of the themes of the prayer. Such free combination and fruitful reconstitution were the hallmarks of this portable scholasticism.

The Lord's Prayer had been a particularly popular topic for commentary in the twelfth-century schools. Though such commentaries had, of course, been written in the earlier medieval period, twelfth-century commentaries took new forms, and aimed at

66 The text of the commentary is edited as an appendix to the modern edition of the *Otia*, 902-23.

67 *Otia*, 903.

68 *Otia*, xcii; II.16, 376.

systematically unpacking the words of the prayer for students in the schools. These twelfth-century commentaries reflect a concern for how different kinds of structures and frameworks might be utilized to make underlying doctrinal truths comprehensible and accessible. The proliferation of commentaries on the Lord's Prayer also reflected a change in teaching practices, as the gospels gained a more central place in lecturing practices.[69] For example, the Benedictine theologian Hugh of Amiens, educated at the prestigious school of Laon and writing in the mid-twelfth century, composed his commentary as part of a work of basic instruction to Christian theology. The Lord's Prayer was one of the three texts it was crucial for a Christian to understand—alongside the Apostle's Creed and Psalm 88.[70] It is this model of commentary which Gervase would have been exposed to during his own time in the schools, probably during the 1170s.

Gervase's commentary contains features which we can describe as "technical" and "scholastic," but there are also several aspects to the commentary which seem to reflect a set of personal interests and his experience of princely courts. Gervase's does not take his reader through the full text of the prayer. It concludes with a discussion of "et dimitte nobis debita nostra," a phrase which has been variously translated into English as "forgive us our debts," "sins," or "trespasses". Gervase omits any commentary on the final lines of the prayer (Matthew vi.13), and instead dwelling on the vastness of human debts owed to God. This stopping place seems significant, given Gervase identifies "debt" as one of the central themes of the prayer. As he introduces the text he explains its purpose: "this prayer has a powerful healing effect: like a receipt cancelling out the old account (*velud veteris cirographi*

69 Beryl Smalley, "Some Gospel Commentaries of the Early Twelfth Century," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 45 (1978): 147-80; more generally see Odo Lottin, *Psychologie et morale aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, vol. vi (Gembloux: Duculot, 1960).

70 R. P. Freeburn, *Hugh of Amiens and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 185; 192; Hugh of Amiens, *Super fide Catholica et oratione dominica*, PL.192.1323-46.

antapeca), it removes the debt attaching to our former slavery."[71] As such, Gervase's interest in the prayer is penitential; it does not aim the full exposition which characterize so many of the surviving school commentaries. Gervase's own introduction recognizes he is aiming at a partial discussion. He describes his commentary as "mere side-dishes" (*parentetica*). One might be tempted to dismiss this as a typical modesty topos, were it not for the fact that there is an evident difference between Gervase's work and the more comprehensive commentaries produced by contemporary masters in theology.

Gervase's commentary does, in some respects if not all, bear the marks of the schools. His works through the prayer by offering divisions and definitions. On the phrase "who art in heaven," Gervase uses this passage to draw a distinction between those heavens which will pass away and the eternal heavens.[72] He discuss the significance of the form "es", and the relationship between the present tense and the sense of time conveyed in the prayer. There is a strikingly scholastic interest in organisation and number in reference to the fact that one can understand the virtues as having either a fourfold or threefold order. Similarly, given the phrase "daily bread," Gervase describes the transformation of the bread in considerable technical theological detail: the bread of the Eucharist loses its own nature, but retains the appearance of bread as form. He is able to explain—albeit briefly—the relationship between accidents and substance.[73]

In short, while this is not cutting-edge exegesis, all these features suggest that Gervase possessed a considerable scholastic hinterland. He was obviously familiar with both scholastic techniques of exposition and also with a range of commentaries on the Lord's Prayer, not merely the text of the prayer itself. We can catch glimpses of this. When Gervase

71 *Otia*, 903-5. The term 'cirographum' has a particular association with a formal written instrument recording financial debts.

72 *Otia*, 909.

73 *Otia*, 920.

comes to deal with the petition "dimitte" towards the end of his commentary, he notes "the proper order has been inverted here, but the alteration was made of necessity. This petition should have come first: for it is natural to begin by asking to undergo purgation."[74] Gervase is referring to the fact that some scholastic commentaries treat the petition "dimitte" out of order, at the start of their text, immediately after "Pater noster qui es in coelis." We cannot know precisely which commentaries Gervase had read, but there is an obvious awareness of other models. One such may have been the influential *Enarrationes in Matthaeum*, composed between 1130 and 1150, which inverts the order of the prayer in just this way.[75] This comment gives us some hint as to how Gervase understood the place and purpose of his work: as a commentary which offered a coherent reading in its own right, but which complemented and supplemented a wider scholastic corpus.

Another significant feature of twelfth-century commentaries on the Lord's Prayer was the use of septenaries as an organising principle. These were the groups of seven to be found across scripture: the relationship between the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the seven beatitudes. This, in itself, was not entirely new: Augustine and Paschasius Radbertus had noted the significance of these groups.[76] But the septenary model saw an explosion of interest in the twelfth century; it can be found in the *Enarrationes in Matthaeum* and the *Glossa ordinaria* on Matthew 5 and 6.[77] It was endorsed and developed by Hugh of St Victor, in his influential *De oratione dominica*.[78] This trend

74 *Otia*, 923.

75 *Enarrationes in Matthaeum*, PL.162.1306DC.

76 Augustine, *De sermone domini in monte*, ed. A. Mutzenbecher (Turnhout: Brepols, 1967), 2.11.38; Paschasius Radbertus, *Expositio in Matthaeum*, PL.120.217-26.

77 e.g. *Glossa ordinaria* on Matt. vi.10, PL.114.101.

78 Hugh of St Victor, *De oratione dominica, De septem donis spiritus sancti*, ed. Francesco Siri (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017). Odo Lottin, "La doctrine d'Anselme de Laon sur les dons du Saint-Esprit et son influence," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 24 (1957): 267-95.

continued into the later twelfth and thirteenth century. Grouping by sevens represented a popular and influential model for imposing order on the text.

Gervase, however, does not employ this scheme. He has nothing to say about the groups of sevens to be found in scripture; he instead uses the commentary to pursue his own intellectual interests. This was not entirely unusual; not *every* scholastic commentary employed this structure.[79] Nonetheless, as Gervase was familiar with other commentaries, the choice to avoid this structure must have been a deliberate one, perhaps because Gervase wished to focus on the underlying themes of debt and feasting within the prayer, rather than its formal structures.

Gervase breaks witha more technical, structured and "scholastic" mode of explication in another way, by providing little formal introduction to the text of the prayer itself. We might compare it with Alan of Lille's commentary, composed in the early 1190s.[80] Alan's commentary proceeds according to a well-defined model; he begins with an *accessus* (introduction) to the text.[81] He treats first Christ's intention in giving the prayer: Christ intended these words as an instruction.[82] Alan considers the prayer as an example of an *oratio*, and then discusses what the *grammatici* have to say about the meaning of that word. Only once Alan has dealt with the fundamental grammatical features of the prayer does he then offer a doctrinal analysis. He explains the place of the prayer in relationship to other Christian teaching: through the petitions we come to the gifts, through the gifts to the virtues,

79 For example, David N. Bell, "The Commentary on the Lord's Prayer of Gilbert Foliot," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 56 (1989): 80-101.

80 Nikolaus M. Häring, "A Commentary on the Our Father by Alan of Lille," *Analecta Cisterciensia* 31 (1975): 149-77. The suggestion here is not that Gervase knew Alan's commentary (which survives in only two manuscripts), but that it can provide a snapshot of late twelfth-century models.

81 On the *accessus* tradition more generally, see E. A. Quain, "The medieval accessus ad auctores," *Traditio* (1945): 215-264.

82 Häring, [1], 158.

through the virtues we arrive at the beatitudes.[83] Alan of Lille—demonstrating the continuing importance of the *trivium* in scholastic theology—pays considerable attention to Christ's mode of speaking.[84] By contrast, while Gervase does touch on *some* of these concerns about intention, material, and utility, he does so indirectly and with little reference to the technical language of grammar. Instead, Gervase simply notes that "Christ speaks to us as a teacher to his disciples, as a master to his servants, as a father to his children."[85] Alan's commentary is characterized by a use of frameworks and division: he breaks down the component parts of each sentence and asks questions. Alan frequently utilizes the injunctions "nota" and "attende."[86] These are obvious signs of a teaching text, and attempts to break down the commentary into smaller sections, not found in Gervase's commentary.

In short, Gervase's commentary offers significant differences in *form* from those of his contemporaries. These can in part be explained by the fact that Gervase was not composing a teaching text but a rather more personal work, a gift for a house of canons. Yet in order to compose his commentary, Gervase required considerable knowledge of how this prayer was explicated in the schools, and that provides him with a framework—ideas and notes which must be covered. Gervase's commentary also suggests some differences in *content*, which we might view as significance. These may speak to Gervase's own experiences: an understanding of the prayer marked by his time in princely courts and exposure to courtly sensibilities.

I return here to the matter of debt. Gervase chooses to end his commentary by contemplating the repayment of debts. Indeed, he observes that debt is such a weighty subject that he cannot give a full account of it; he will "postpone this task to another day." The

83 The phrase is to be found in the *Enarrationes in Matthaeum*, PL.162.1305: "per petitiones venitur ad dona, per dona ad virtutem, per virtutes ad beatitudines".

84 Häring, [12], 161; "Attende quoque triplex modum orandi…".

85 *Otia*, 905.

86 e.g. Häring [19], 163; [24], 164.

commentary ends on a note that all human life is suffused with debt: "it would take us a long time to set forth our debts, which it was easier to incur (*facere*) than it is to discharge (*exsolvere*)."[87] Might one see this concern for the prevalence of debt as reflecting the political and financial realities of twelfth- and thirteenth century courts, in which royal authorities established ever more complex mechanisms for monitoring monies owed?[88] The proposition is a somewhat speculative one, as many medieval theologians naturally discussed the term *debitum* in the course of their commentaries, addressing the relationship between forgiveness and the nature of sin. But Gervase does strike a different and distinctive note. He is particularly concerned with accounting, and the matter of how debts can be calculated and estimated. Throughout the commentary, Gervase also reflects a concern for disparities of wealth and poverty in the social order; what the rich man has and the poor man lacks.[89] Similar concerns about the role of debt in human society were beginning to be expressed in the late twelfth-century courts of Europe. In England, the courtier and archdeacon Walter Map was preoccupied with the role played by money and debt played at the Angevin court, and how control of purse strings might limit or empower a ruler. The final chapter of Map's *De nugis curialium* laments a world where money can purchase pardon, and where a powerful royal exchequer uses debt as a tool of control.[90] Gervase had inhabited the same world as Walter Map, where royal accounting practices were becoming ever more scrupulous, and which an "accounting mentality" was being cultivated and inculcated in royal

87 *Otia*, 923.

88 For the increasing importance of this "reckoning" across all institutions, and a sense of what was changing in this period, see Robert F. Berkhofer III, *Day of Reckoning: Power and Accountability in Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Berkhofer's focus is concentrated on abbatial accounting.

89 *Otia*, 917.

90 Walter Map*, De nugis curialium,* ed. M. R. James, C. Brooke and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), V.7; see also I.17.

servants.[91] The experience of the developed bureaucracies of either the Angevin or the Norman Sicilian court might have made him particularly aware of the indebtedness.[92]

The other significant—and strikingly "courtly"—theme in the commentary is Gervase's use of the metaphor of a banquet to describe the delights of heaven. This idea permeates the commentary: the cleansing of the human soul accomplished through prayer is akin to preparing oneself for presentation at a banquet (*offerre se ad convivium*); God's love for the good is presented as "a cup of red wine, full mixed."[93] The image of a banquet is used more extensively in Gervase's exegesis of the phrase *panem nostrum cotidianum*.[94] Beginning from the bread, Gervase describes the universal banquet (*ad omnium convivium*) where a great supper (*cene magne*) will provide full refreshment (*plena refectio*). There will be different tables and different kinds of refreshment, according to how one has distinguished oneself in life; monks and nuns will be rewarded differently to those who have not restrained themselves in life; the truly just will receive an even greater feast.[95] The metaphor of the banquet is explored in detail, through the categories of tables, bread, and guests (*mensa, panis, et convive*). This is, to say the least, an unusual model. A more conventional scholastic account would here link *panem* to the idea of hungering for justice; treating the act of consumption allegorically.[96] Perhaps instead this is a reflection of Gervase's time in the secular world and offices: for a man who had served kings and emperors, a vision of feasting and entertainment provided the most logical way to approach a vision of heavenly

91 Such a change is often seen as embodied in England in the work known as the "Dialogue of the Exchequer": Richard Fitzneale, *Dialogus De Scaccario*, ed. Emilie Amt and S. D. Church (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007). For a commentary, see U. Kypta, "How to be an Exchequer Clerk in the Twelfth Century: What the Dialogue of the Exchequer is Really About," *History*, 103 (2018): 199-222.

92 For Sicilian attention to accounting, see H. Takayama, "The Great Administrative Officials of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 58 (1990): 317-335.

93 *Otia*, 909, an allusion to Psalm 74 (75).

94 *Otia*, 915.

95 *Otia*, 919.

96 e.g. Hugh of St Victor, *De oratione dominica*, 198-9.

refreshment.[97] Indeed, the metaphor and the relationship between feasting and hospitality is hinted at in his introduction to his commentary: "I am unable to invite you to a full meal, but I offer you bread baked on the hearth with a drop of oil from my flask."[98]

Gervase's commentary was intended as a gift, not a teaching tool. Through it we may (intermittently) be able to see traces of his own intellectual development. It displays a knowledge of scholastic form and models, but influenced and shaped by his experiences of courtly priorities and obligations. This is true of both the commentary and the *Otia*. The two texts are reflections of how a scholastically-trained mind might continue to develop beyond the schools. Gervase was not the only secular author of this period to compose his own commentary on the Lord's Prayer; there are some indications that this was a more widespread activity for educated laymen than we have otherwise assumed.[99]

The *Otia* and the Commentary on the Lord's Prayer are, first and foremost, testament to the vitality of intellectual life conducted in earthly courts, observed by a man who moved through palaces and served temporal rulers. Gervase had very little difficulty in imagining heavenly reward as something that much resembled an earthly banquet. One cannot but be struck by the depth of Gervase's theological learning across both texts. This was not an interest Gervase took up in the final years of his life, upon entering a house of Premonstratensians: his theological engagement is embedded in his work of courtly entertainment. Indeed, Gervase probably needed a basic grounding in both the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic) and theology in order to formulate his legal arguments, especially those about the status of popes and emperors. That learning was mobile. Gervase

97 Images of feasting and fasting in relation to the Eucharist and communion with God would become particularly significant in the later medieval Europe, as is well known: Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), esp. 1-12. But Gervase is significantly earlier than most of Bynum's examples, and seems to come out of a different intellectual tradition.

98 *Otia*, 903.

99 See Maio of Bari, above, n. 21.

was equipped with a common set of reference points—historical and theological—which provided him with a frame for his thinking. It could be refashioned for different courts and audiences; it could be (as the *Otia* demonstrates) expanded upon at length. His career and writings are testament to the portability of late twelfth-century scholastic learning; a model that adapted as successfully to the climate of Provence as Palermo.