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INTRODUCTION

The 'linguistic turn' in philosophy during the second half of the twentieth century caused much excitement about the acts of reading and writing amongst anthropologists, sociologists and historians.[1] For medieval historians, the refined notion of literacy as a mode of communication that works on numerous different levels has provided a better understanding of the paradox that medieval civilisation, despite a perceived dearth of literate skills when compared with later historical epochs in Europe, was a literate civilisation.[2] Literacy was an integral part of medieval culture. Religion was of the Holy Book. Laws, statutes, agreements and codes of required social behaviour were written down for everyone concerned to consult and (ideally) obey. Philosophical questioning and knowledge of the world and its wonders were passed on through writings. We can no longer agree with the picture that such activities were confined to a clerical and educated elite, while the rest of the population went on

[1] A great deal of debate was stimulated by the work of J. Goody, as found in Goody (ed.) *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1968), esp. Goody and I. Watt, 'The consequences of literacy', in *ibid.*, pp. 69–83. See further J. Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge, 1977); *The Logic of Writing and the Organisation of Society* (Cambridge, 1986). Goody's general arguments have received a great deal of criticism, most convincingly in S. Scribner and S.M. Cole, *The Psychology of Literacy* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), cf. C. Lévi-Strauss. *Tristes-Tropiques*, trans. J. and D. Weightman (New York, 1974); J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. C. Spivak (Baltimore, 1976), pp. 97–140. A different approach with similar conclusions similar to Goody's can be found in E. Havelock, *Origins of Western Literacy* (Toronto, 1976); Havelock, *The Literate Revolution in Ancient Greece and Its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton, 1982). See also W. J. Ong, *Interfaces of the Word* (Ithaca, 1977); Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologising of the Word* (London and New York, 1982); B. Street, *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, 1984). H.J. Graff, *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society* (Bloomington, 1987). The 'industry' of studies in literacy now needs its own dictionary: S. Theodore, L. Harris and R. Hodges (eds.), *The Literacy Dictionary: The Vocabulary of Reading and Writing* (Newark, 1994).

[2] F. Bäuml, 'Varieties and consequences of medieval literacy and illiteracy', *Speculum* 55:2 (1980), 237–65, esp. p. 237; M. Camille, 'Seeing and reading: some visual implications of medieval literacy and illiteracy', *Art History* 8 (1995), 133–48. The term can be extended to cover many aspects of communication: see M. Mostert (ed.), *New Approaches to Medieval Communication* (Turnhout, 1999).

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untouched by them and their interests, or, vice versa, that the elite were not affected by the world in which they lived and worked.[3]

New understandings of literacy sparked a number of important studies which drew back the chronological boundaries for a substantial dissemination of literate skills from the Renaissance, Reformation and early modern periods to the high middle ages.[4] Since then, the chronology has been pushed back even further. Rosamond McKitterick's *Carolingians and the Written Word* was in many ways a reaction against views that see a 'rebirth' of literacy in the higher middle ages. Instead, McKitterick called for continuity in our understanding of the history of literacy, seeing the post-millennium developments as 'an increase, extension and diversification of literate skills, the next stage in a continuous pattern from late antiquity to the early Germanic kingdoms'.[5] Having investigated the evidence of the Carolingian kingdoms, she concluded that 'The written word . . . was used by the Carolingians on an apparently larger scale than ever before in the barbarian kingdoms of Western Europe.'[6] It is difficult to doubt this conclusion when looking quantitatively at the surviving evidence: in manuscripts alone, some 7000 survive from the Carolingian period compared with around 1850 for the late antique and early medieval period prior to 800 AD.

Nevertheless we are entitled to ask the same questions concerning continuity for the period prior to the Carolingians. There has always been a sneaking suspicion amongst early medieval historians that Lombard Italy played a substantial role in providing foundations, or models, for the types of literate activity we see in the Carolingian period, in terms of both a 'high' literary culture of Latin letters and the everyday use of literacy at the administrative and governmental levels. The suspicion is not without foundation, but the paucity of surviving evidence for manuscript script production and literary composition allows little more than a nod to possibilities.[7]

[3] For 'classic overstatements of medieval illiteracy', Bäuml, 'Varieties and consequences', pp. 237–8. These views are still alive and well: M. Richter, *The Formation of the Medieval West: Studies in the Oral Culture of the Barbarians* (New York, 1994).

[4] Two works in particular merit special attention: B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983), and M. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1993).

[5] *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 1. Also R. McKitterick (ed.), *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990).

[6] McKitterick, *Carolingians*, p. 273.

[7] See F. Brunhölzl, 'Der Bildungsauftrag der Hofschule', in B. Bischoff (ed.), *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, II, *Das Geistige Leben* (Düsseldorf, 1965), pp. 28–41; Brunhölzl, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Munich, 1975), II, pp. 243–85; G. Brown, 'The Carolingian Renaissance', in R. McKitterick (ed.), *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 1–51, esp. pp. 28–30; P. Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West: From the*

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With respect to the uses of literacy in administration and government, McKitterick was quick to point out the inherent biases towards Italy in arguing against Ganshof's views on the limited uses of writing in Carolingian administration.[8] She found two unpalatable assumptions in Ganshof's conclusions. The first was that the Franks primarily used ineffective oral methods of communication and, therefore, the evidence of literate practices in government were aberrations from the norm. The second assumption was:

> that Italy, fount of civilisation, obviously preserved and was able to preserve and carry on literate methods of government. It is not my intention to dispute or refute the assumptions concerning Lombard Italy, albeit I retain grave doubts concerning their validity. It is time, indeed, that the question of literacy and levels of Latin learning in Lombard Italy were tackled head on.[9]

The present study is an attempt to take up the call of McKitterick's challenge. The description of Italy as the *fons civilitatis* neatly highlights the reason why the subject needs to be tackled head on. Western historiography has inherited a large number of assumptions concerning the connection between literacy and civilisation from Italian humanists and their successors, who believed ancient Roman urbanity and its texts were the height of human endeavour and the ideals to which the world should aspire.[10] Medieval historians are well aware that they work within the Petrarchian periodisation of a *medium aevum* based on such assumptions.[11] Early medieval historians are forced to contend with the real presence of ancient Roman culture in their field of investigation, a culture in which

Sixth through the Eighth Century, trans. J. Contreni (Columbia, SC, 1976), p. 497; D. Bullough, *The Age of Charlemagne*, 2nd edition (London, 1973), p. 100, 107; Bullough, 'Urban change in early medieval Italy: the example of Pavia', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 34 (1966), 82–131, esp. pp. 94–102; Bullough, 'Aula renovata: the Carolingian court before the Aachen palace', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 71 (1985), 267–301, esp. pp. 284–5. Similar arguments apply to illuminated manuscripts and art in general: A. Boeckler, 'Die Evangelistenbilder der Adagruppe', *Münchner Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst* 3:3–4 (1952–53), 121–44; Boeckler,'Die Kanonbogen der Adagruppe und ihre Vorlagen', *Münchner Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst*, 5 (1954), 7–22; H. Fillitz. 'Die italiensche Kunst des 8. Jahrhunderts als Voraussetzung der Kunst am Hofe Karls des Grossen', *Settimane* 20 (Spoleto, 1973), 783–802; H. Belting, 'Probleme der Kunstgeschichte Italiens im Frühmittelalter', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 1 (1967), 94–143; J. Mitchell, 'The display of script and the uses of painting in Longobard Italy', *Settimane* 41.2 (Spoleto, 1994), 887–951.

[8] McKitterick, *Carolingians*, p. 25. Similarly, J. Nelson, 'Literacy in Carolingian government', in McKitterick (ed.), *Uses*, pp. 258–96. F.L. Ganshof, 'Charlemagne et l'usage de l'écrit en matière administrative', *Le Moyen Age* 57 (1951), 1–25, Eng. trans. by J. Sondheimer in Ganshof, *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History* (Ithaca, NY, 1971), pp. 125–42.

[9] *Carolingians* p. 26. Similarly expressed in McKitterick (ed.), *Uses*, p. 10. Petrucci, *Scriptores* (note 13 below), p. 6, responded.

[10] See Clanchy, *Memory*, pp. 11–16.

[11] T. Mommsen, 'Petrarch's conception of the Dark Ages', *Speculum* 17 (1942), 226–42.

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literacy was highly valued. The Roman heritage of Italy, of course, is of enormous importance in understanding the development of Italian society in the early medieval period (and, arguably, in any period of Italian history). The question to be 'tackled' is posed thus: in 568 the arrival of the Lombards heralded the end of the Roman empire in most parts of Italy, yet Italy had a long history of literacy under Roman rule. What happened to literacy in Italy under 'barbarian' rule?

The historiographical bias towards Italy as a repository of Roman literate culture, a *fons civilitatis*, is therefore spiced by another set of assumptions concerning the Lombards. Considered by Gibbon, and by many more recent commentators, as the quintessential barbarians, 'fierce and illiterate',[12] the Lombards were the third and final wave of Germanic invaders responsible for knocking Italy out of its late Roman orbit and pushing it into the early middle ages. The earlier Ostrogothic period, in contrast, is characterised as an 'Indian summer' of Roman continuity. The Ostrogothic regime essentially maintained a late Roman political framework, paid homage to senatorial values concerning the connections between literacy and *civilitas*, and nurtured *litterati* such as Boethius, Cassiodorus and Ennodius of Pavia. No such figures emerge from the Lombard kingdom until the time of its demise. The paucity of manuscript evidence and the dearth of narrative sources from the Lombard period are considered as further evidence of a Dark Age for literacy.

It has often been assumed that since the Lombards, as Germanic invaders, robbed the empire of Italy, they robbed Italy of literacy also. For example, Armando Petrucci, one of the foremost authorities on the palaeography of early medieval Italy, devoted an essay 'The Lombard problem' to the history of literacy in Italy. Petrucci explains the reason why the Lombards, in the earlier stages of their settlement and consolidation in Italy, had no 'need' for the use of written communication, or indeed any communication at all, owing to their German ethnicity:

> If Roman society was a society of dialogue and communication, in which writing constituted the connective tissue of every practical and intellectual activity, Germanic society, and Lombard society in particular, were, to the contrary, societies devoid of a real need of communication or dialogue; or rather, societies in which the simplicity of administrative structures and the meagre sum of cultural traditions allowed the necessary web of social contacts to form and be governed through oral means.

[12] E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J.B. Bury, IV (London, 1909), p. 136.

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The Lombard invasion inaugurated a 'reversal of values and of prestige in the realm of culture', a culture in which the civility of literacy had no place.[13]

There are many assumptions here that are more than questionable in the light of recent research on the topics of barbarians, the later Roman empire and early medieval literacy. A loosely defined and often unhelpful Roman–German dichotomy, as an explanatory paradigm, has dogged much Italian historiography concerning the early medieval period, although it is easy to detect signs of its increasing obsolescence as we move further away from Italy's experiences of the twentieth century.[14] The notion of the 'simplicity' of oral culture is more than misleading, and we shall leave aside altogether the contention that Lombard society had no 'need to communicate'. The characterisation of Lombard administrative structures as 'simplistic', however, needs qualification. The Lombard settlement accelerated changes already taking place in relation to the uses of literacy: the integration of the civil and military in society; the decreasing power of the central imperial government in provincial Italian life; and the prevalence of land-owning as the predominant basis for wealth and social status in society. Chapter 1 seeks to explore these changes by examining the question of literacy in late antique and Ostrogothic Italy in order to place the establishment of Lombard rule in north-central Italy in its proper historical context. It is worth asking, however, just who the Lombards were and how they established their rule in Italy with respect to the adaptation of Roman literate traditions. This, then, is the goal of chapter 2, which proceeds to examine early court culture and the role of religion in helping to legitimate Lombard power and establish Lombard identity. Chapter 3 focuses upon the relationship between written and spoken language by examining the Latin of the sources and how this relates to the linguistic environment of Lombard Italy.

Chapters 4–7 focus upon a particular genre of evidence, namely law, charters, inscriptions and manuscripts. The arrangement is a result of the approach taken here to the subject of literacy in this period as much

[13] Petrucci's previous articles on early medieval Italy have been collected and re-edited with C. Romeo in *Scriptores in urbibus: alfabetismo e cultura scritta nell'Italia altomedievale* (Bologna, 1992), henceforth cited simply as Petrucci, *Scriptores*: 'Il problema', pp. 35–56, at pp. 38, 54. This essay, and others concerning Italy, have been published in English: *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy: Studies in the History of Written Culture*, trans. C.M. Radding (New Haven and London, 1995), pp. 43–58, at pp. 45, 57.

[14] B. Luiselli, *Storia culturale dei rapporti tra mondo romano e mondo germanico* (Rome, 1992). But cf. G. Tabacco, 'Latinità e germanesimo nella tradizione medievalistica italiana', *Rivista Storica Italiana* 102 (1990), 691–716.

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as a simple method of organising material. A preliminary few words, therefore, on the definition of literacy used in this study are in order.

Although the term 'literacy' encompasses the acts of both reading and writing, we need to remember that these are two separate skills, and that reading was far more widely practised than writing.[15] Definitions of literacy are notoriously vague and relative to different periods and places. In his *Ancient Literacy*, Harris cited the 1958 UNESCO definition of an illiterate person, as someone 'who cannot with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life', and points out that even UNESCO dropped the definition twenty years later in a worldwide survey of literacy.[16] Richter has scoffed at scholars such as Clanchy and McKitterick for following an 'English empiricist tradition' and allegedly avoiding a real need for more theoretical approaches to the subject which might sharpen our understanding of how literacy operated in this period.[17] Yet it is also true that 'writing about literacy in the abstract is thus dangerous as it homogenizes culturally distinct and socially diverse practices'.[18] If cards are to be laid on the table, then I confess to an empiricist approach in the following study, not without reason. Literacy, as a set of skills pertaining to the separate acts of reading and writing, is essentially a highly individualistic and somewhat personal phenomenon. Our surviving sources are never particularly personal: no individual gives detailed descriptions of their own or someone else's attainment of literate skills and how this affected their lives. In the absence of direct references to the attainment of literate skills by individuals, we can do no more than focus upon the evidence for the uses of script and attempt to draw out the implications of its existence: who used it, how they used it and why they used it. Hence this study does not pretend to offer any precise definitions of literacy, but rather attempts to understand the different uses of literacy in Italo-Lombard society. Chapters 4–7 do this by focusing upon a particular genre of evidence and extrapolating from the individual circumstances surrounding the production and dissemination of a particular text, whether it be a hastily scribbled charter or a laboriously inscribed epitaph. Nevertheless, some points need to be made here concerning the relationship between reading and writing in this period as means of communication.

[15] See Riché, 'Apprendre à lire et à écrire dans le haut moyen-âge', *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* (1978–79), 193–203.
[16] W. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1989), p. 3.
[17] Richter, *Formation*, p. 48 n. 9; cf. nn. 123, 125–7.
[18] M. Innes, 'Memory, orality and literacy in an early medieval society', *Past and Present* 158 (1998), 3–36, at p. 10.

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To begin with writing, let us take a statement by an anonymous scribe on the act of writing found in the colophon of a late eighth-century Italian legal manuscript: 'Whoever does not know how to write thinks it is no work at all. But oh how burdensome is script! It oppresses your eyes, bruises your kidneys, as well as making all your limbs sorrow at the same time. Three fingers write, but the whole body suffers.'[19] The fact that such statements are not found in the ancient world should not lead us to consider them as indicative of a 'profound cultural change' or a general devaluation of writing in the early middle ages.[20] It was a monastic topos to emphasise the labour involved in writing a manuscript and a plea for the reader to take care in using it 'ne subito litteras deleas'.[21] It might also suggest that demand for texts was overrunning supply. The colophon also draws attention to the physiological aspects of writing, an act which requires a degree of control and co-ordination of motor skills that were more threatened by ailments and disease than is common today. This is an important corrective to a definition of literacy as writing subscriptions on charters, because such physical ailments contributed significantly to the number of people who could write. In 765 the abbot Rignolf was called upon by his son, the young priest Rixolf, to provide legal consent for Rixolf's donation to a church in Lucca. Rignolf gave his consent, but because of his illness he required his son, who also wrote the charter, to subscribe for him.[22] Similarly, the Lucchese cleric Aniprand could not write 'propter neglegentia usui sui manibus suis propriis [*sic*]', that is, an inability to use his own hands.[23] In sixth-century Ravenna, the *vir devotus* Gregorius complained that he could not sign his own will owing to the gout in his feet.[24] Moreover, some witnesses in Lombard charters state that they could not write because of their poor eyesight.[25] As Umberto Eco reminded us in *The Name of the Rose*, the invention of spectacles in the late thirteenth century not only facilitated an increase in the percentage of the population who could read, but also greatly increased the longevity

[19] 'Qui nescit scribere, putat hoc esse nullum laborem. O quam gravis est scriptura: oculos gravat, renes frangit, simul et omnia membra contristat. Tria digita scribunt, totus corpus laborat', in W. Wattenbach, *Das Schriftwesen im Mittelalter*, 3rd edn (Leipzig, 1896), p. 283.
[20] Richter, *Formation*, p. 50.
[21] As is clear from rest of the colophon: 'beatissime lector, lava manus tuas et sic librum aprehende, leniter folia turna. longe a littera digito pone. Quia qui nescit scribere [etc.]. Wattenbach, *Schriftwesen*, pp. 282–3.
[22] CDL 194:'hanc paginam fili mei me consentientem scribere, quia ego pre egredtudine mea non potuit scribere'.
[23] ChLA 948. [24] Tjäder, P. 4–5.
[25] ChLA 966, 'propter caliginem oculorum menime potuit manu sua subscribere': ChLA 932. Also Tjäder, P. 34.

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of a person's reading life.[26] If the questions we ask about the past are determined by the present, at the least we must try to avoid evaluating the position of literacy in past periods in comparison to the modern industrialised world in which we live, a world in which medical and optic sciences have permitted greater numbers of opportunities for reading, and as a corollary, writing.

The physiological element of reading and writing in the early middle ages forces us to acknowledge two interrelated aspects: first, the 'oral' nature of reading aloud in this period, and second, the communal or social component of reading. The oral nature of reading aloud in antiquity and in the early middle ages is well attested in the contemporary sources which do not have to be rehearsed here, although it is worth noting that reading aloud was not the only method of reading.[27] The importance of this factor for understanding the transmission of information in literate form cannot be underestimated: it was not necessary to be able to read in order to partake of the world of books, documents, inscriptions, and script in general.[28] To take an example from our period, Pope Gregory I's story of the quadruplegic Servulus serves as a poignant reminder of how even the most disadvantaged could take part in the world of reading:

> He did not know how to read or write; still he bought himself the sacred books of Scripture and had them read to him regularly by religious persons whom he used to invite to his home as guests. Thus, in his own way he acquired a knowledge of the whole of scripture, although, as I said, he was quite illiterate.[29]

Reading, an act of recitation, was not only pronounced, but also performed. The performance aspect of communal reading in monastic circles can be heard in the stipulations of Benedict's *Rule*.[30] This type of communal reading was a reflection of that which was going on outside the monastery in the wider community. The oral nature of reading is further emphasised by the original form of early medieval Italian texts, for they are almost completely devoid of word-separation and use only minimal punctuation.[31] A person reading from a text obtained its meaning by listening to sounds, rather than by seeing words or phrases and construing them according to their concordance with grammatical rules and

[26] See E. Rosen, 'Did Roger Bacon invent eyeglasses?', *Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Sciences* 33 (1954), 35–46, and Rosen, 'The invention of eyeglasses', *Journal of the History of Medicine* 11 (1956), 125–47; G.H. Oliver, *History of the Invention and Discovery of Spectacles* (London, 1913). Cf. K. Chiu, 'The introduction of spectacles into China', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 1 (1936), 5–34; A. Crombie, *Augustine to Galileo*, 2 vols., 3rd edn in 1 vol. (London, 1979), pp. 233–7.

[27] J. Balogh, '*Voces paginarum*: Beiträge zur Geschichte des lauten Lesens und Schreibens', *Philologus* 82 (1927), 84–109, 202–40; Richter, *Formation*, pp. 52–55.

[28] See Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, p. 90.

[29] *Dialogues* IV.15.

[30] *RB* (see below, pp. 47–8) 38, 47, 12.4, 66, 4.10, 3.3.

[31] See below, pp. 261, 307–8.

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regulations of the inflectional system of the Latin language. In such texts, the dual perception of the grapheme and the phoneme is inseparable in the signification of meaning.[32]

The evidence of administrative and governmental forms of literacy, such as laws and charters, points towards a society in which literacy played a fundamental role in the functioning of the Lombard state and in the everyday life of the kingdom. In particular, autographed subscriptions on charters are cited as evidence of literacy amongst a large proportion of the population.[33] The most thorough application of such evidence to the question of literacy has been Petrucci's examination of subscriptions (numbering 988 in all) in the witness lists of charters from the Lombard kingdom, which led him to four conclusions:

1 In eighth-century Lombard Italy there was a certain diffusion of the knowledge of writing among the middle and upper classes of society, which, however, completely excluded women.
2 The vast majority of ecclesiastics, in small centres or in cities, were literate.
3 Lay literacy seems to diminish in the countryside and less inhabited areas in comparison with the more populated centres.
4 Lay literacy does not appear to be connected with social functions or particular tradespeople. We find some royal functionaries, moneyers and goldsmiths who were unable to write, as well as others who could. The five identifiable craftsmen who appear as witnesses (a blacksmith, a *magister murorum*, a *magister commacinus*, a shoemaker and a tinker) are all illiterate.[34]

In sum, 32.7 per cent of subscribers were 'literate'. Petrucci's attempt to discern the 'graphic capacity' of the person subscribing redeems his quantitative method with more qualitative concerns.[35] The *vista paleografica*, however, can often neglect the social relations that constitute literate practices in favour of a specialised focus on textual concerns and the history of script, rather than the history of people. It is a problem of which palaeographers of Petrucci's calibre are well aware.[36]

[32] *Contra* Goody, *Domestication*, pp. 44–50, 78.
[33] For example T.S. Brown, 'The transformation of the Roman Mediterranean, 400–900', in G. Holmes (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 1988), p. 39; also, C. J. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society 400–1000* (London and Basingstoke, 1981), p. 124 (hereafter *EMI*); Clanchy, *Memory*, p. 12.
[34] A. Petrucci 'Libro, scrittura e scuola', *Settimane* 19 (Spoleto,1972), 313–38; repr. 'Alle origini dell'alfabetismo altomedievale', *Scriptores*, pp. 13–34, at p. 23; trans. Radding, *Writers and Readers*, p. 68.
[35] See A. Petrucci, 'David Cressy: sull'alfabetismo in Inghilterra', *Quaderni Storici* 51/a. Dec. (1982), 1129–33. Cf. McKitterick, *Carolingians*, p. 3.
[36] See his 'Storia della scrittura e storia della società', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 21 (1991), 309–22.

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More information

The writing of a formulaic subscription involves a limited understanding of literacy. The problem is one not only of using autograph subscriptions as evidence for literacy, but also of using their absence or substitution with a cross *signum manus* as an indicator of illiteracy.[37] Chris Wickham remarked that Lombard autograph subscriptions were evidence of an awareness of what written law and proofs meant, even if such a 'functionally' literate person could not read particularly fluently, 'let alone read Virgil for pleasure'.[38] But the same could be said for witnesses who placed their *signum manus* upon a document. They may or may not have been able to read at all, but their participation in the act of conferring legitimacy upon a document demonstrates their acquaintance with the authority of the written word in legal affairs. In chapter 4, therefore, I explore the relationship of literacy to the socio-legal culture of Lombard Italy by examining the Lombard law code, both as a manifestation of legal literacy and as an instrument of Lombard government. In particular, I focus on the themes of women, manumission, and the uses of literacy in central and local government, in an attempt to provide a more satisfactory picture of how legal literacy affected Italo-Lombard society.

I then discuss who wrote charters, rather than just subscriptions, in chapter 5. The emphasis is on determining whether or not there existed any recognisable 'profession' for the redaction of documents, and if such skills were widespread or easily obtainable in this period. This raises the issues of the level of literacy required to write a charter and the type of education or training needed to do so. It further provides us with an insight into the type of documentary culture within which the scribe worked. Also considered are the social rituals surrounding the redaction of a charter, and the themes of 'public' and 'private' documentation with respect to both the redaction and the preservation of documents.

Chapter 6 focuses on the evidence of inscriptions in a further attempt to discern the 'script culture' of Lombard Italy and how the medium of epigraphy functioned as a form of literacy, a form which has not received its due attention in this context, at least not by medieval historians. In chapter 7 I turn to discuss the manuscript evidence of Lombard Italy, which too often has been erroneously considered negligible, in order to explore the role played by monasteries and churches as centres of written culture. This is followed by a brief discussion of the survival of classical works in Lombard Italy, and the implications of the diversity

[37] Bäuml, 'Varieties and consequences', pp. 240–1.
[38] *EMI*, p. 125. Cf. B. Rea, 'The context and meaning of popular literacy: some evidence from nineteenth-century rural England', *Past and Present* 131 (1991), 81–129.

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