

# *Orrmulum*: Genre membership and text organisation

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**Abstract.** This paper discusses the genre membership of the twelfth-century Middle English exegetical work named by its author *Orrmulum*. The work is usually described as a homily collection, but a closer analysis shows that it combines properties of two contemporary text genres. On the one hand it exhibits some typical features of a **homiliary** (homily collection), such as a verse-by-verse exegesis of gospel texts (while lacking others, such as following the arrangement of the gospel texts (lections) in the Missal, as these are presented chronologically for each Mass throughout the liturgical year). On the other hand the work exhibits some properties of a **gospel harmony**, a kind of text whose aim is to combine the narratives of the four gospels into one coherent story (while it lacks other properties, such as independence of the Missal).

The *Preface of Orrmulum* can similarly be shown to be of mixed genre membership. On the one hand it has all the properties of a Ciceronian *praefatio*, in that it comments on the relationship between the author and various other people, such as his patron, his readers, his copyist, and his detractors. On the other hand it shows the typical features of the prologue of a twelfth-century exegetical work (a “type C prologue”, Minnis 1985): it presents the name of the author and of the work, it states the usefulness of the work, etc.

This paper also outlines the textual organisation of *Orrmulum*, since the marking of these matters in the author’s holograph manuscript is only poorly represented in the standard edition (Holt 1878), and therefore unknown to any reader of the text who does not go back to the manuscript.

**Keywords:** *Orrmulum*, homiliary, gospel harmony, textual organisation, Ciceronian *praefatio*, “type C prologue”, holograph

## 1 Introduction

The twelfth-century Middle English exegetical work named by its author *Orrmulum* (“forþi þatt orrm itt wrohhte”, ‘because Orrm composed it’, P158 [P2]) is presumably known to most modern readers through its standard edition, Holt 1878 (a marginally updated version of its predecessor, White 1852).<sup>1</sup> This paper will focus on aspects of *Orrmulum* that were

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<sup>1</sup> Passages from *Orrmulum* will be quoted from my own edition (in progress). The line numbers coincide in most cases with those in Holt 1878; if there is a discrepancy, Holt numbers will be added in square brackets. The letters preceding the line numbers refer to the text sec-

poorly dealt with in the two nineteenth-century editions and which have turned out to be highly relevant in connection with my current project on the Latin sources of *Ormmulum*.<sup>2</sup> It seems appropriate in a tribute to Philip Shaw to focus on questions of genre membership and textual organisation, topics which he himself has handled eminently with respect to various types of modern English text.

## 2 Text genre

The text of *Ormmulum*, produced (presumably) in the third quarter of the twelfth century,<sup>3</sup> is described by its author, the Austin canon Orm, in the following fashion:

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| <p>(1) <b>Ʒ</b> Icc hafe sammnedd o þiss boc.<br/>         þa goddspelless neh alle:<br/> <b>Þ</b>att sinn denn o þe messe boc.<br/>         Inn all þe Ʒer att messe.<br/> <b>Ʒ</b> 7 aƷƷ affterr þe goddspell stannt.<br/>         Þatt tatt te goddspell menepþ.<br/> <b>Þ</b>att mann birrþ spellenn to þe folc.<br/>         Off þeƷƷre sawle nede.<br/> <b>7</b> Ʒét tær tekenn mare inoh.<br/>         þu shallt tær onne findenn.<br/> <b>Off</b> þatt tatt cristess hall<sup>h</sup>Ʒe þed:<br/>         Birrþ trowwenn wel. 7 foll<sup>h</sup>Ʒenn.</p> | <p>‘I have gathered in this book<br/>         nearly all the gospels<br/>         that are in the Missal<br/>         throughout the year for Mass.<br/>         And always after the gospel stands<br/>         what the gospel means,<br/>         what you should preach to the people<br/>         for the good of their souls.<br/>         And in addition to that much more<br/>         you will find in it<br/>         of that which Christ’s holy people<br/>         should believe well and follow.’<br/>         (P29–40 [D29–40])</p> |
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Although essentially correct in the sense that Orm provides explications of gospel lections (“goddspelless”) as defined and demarcated by his Missal, this description is nevertheless misleading in the sense that it gives the impression that the gospel texts (‘nearly all the gospels that are in the Missal throughout the year’ P31–32 [D31–32]) are presented in the order they are

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tions: P=*Preface* and H=*Homilies*. A few excerpts are taken from the passage labelled *Dedication* in Holt’s edition, hence D.

<sup>2</sup> Swedish Research Council Project number 2010-2094, “For the good of their souls: A study of the Latin sources and how they were modified in the composition of the twelfth-century Middle English homily collection *Ormmulum*.”

<sup>3</sup> The modern consensus view of the date of *Ormmulum* is based on Malcolm Parkes’ (1983) analysis of the characteristics of the writing of the so-called Scribe C, responsible for inserting the Latin *incipits* of the gospel texts. According to Parkes, these *incipits* are not likely to have been written later than 1180, and since they were added after Orm had finished writing and revising the English text of his homilies, it seems reasonable to assume that this work must have kept him occupied between ca. 1160 and 1180.

used as lections during the liturgical year, as in any ordinary **homiliary**. This is not the case: Orm presents the gospel lections in a sequence which shows no regard for the liturgical year, but rather presents a chronological account of events before, during and after the lives of John the Baptist and Christ. From this point of view, the work has much in common with a **gospel harmony**. Yet even in this respect *Ormmulum* does not quite live up to the genre expectations: a gospel harmony should be based on the text of the four gospels, from which the harmoniser selects and combines passages as he sees fit with no regard for the way the gospels had been cut up into lections in the Missal. Orm, by contrast, adheres faithfully to the division of the gospels into lections. This becomes particularly striking when he has to combine two lections to create one continuous narrative, as in the case of Luke 2:1–21, which is divided into two lections, for the first and second mass on Christmas day, respectively. Since the first lection ends with the angel announcing the birth of Christ to the shepherds (and the heavenly host making a brief appearance with its song), and the second one deals with what the shepherds did after the angels left them, Orm, not unreasonably, wishes to tell the story of the shepherds from beginning to end. His fidelity to the lection format is so great, however, that he can only do that by presenting the two *goddspelless* consecutively but separately, as numbers vii and viii.

In terms of its genre characteristics, *Ormmulum* is thus best described as a hybrid between a homiliary and a gospel harmony, sharing the lection-based explications of gospel texts with a typical homiliary, and sharing the attempt at a chronological presentation of gospel events with a typical gospel harmony.

For the homiliary aspects of the work, there would have been no lack of model texts: the homilies by Bede, Rabanus Maurus, and Haymo Halberstatensis were clearly known to Orm, in all likelihood also the *Homiliarius* compiled by Paulus Diaconus. It also seems likely that he was familiar with homilies by Gregorius I, Remigius Antissiodorensis, Godefridus Admontensis, and Radulfus Ardens. In addition, there were numerous works in other genres—*commentaria*, *expositiones*, *sermones*, *enarrationes*—many of which were no doubt available to Orm, which also provided the same kind of interpretation of scripture as the great homily collections.

Orm may even have been familiar with English homiletic material, in particular the homilies by Aelfric and Wulfstan; cf. the discussion in Morrison 1983, 1984, 1995. Yet it is clearly the Latin homiletic tradition that provides Orm with as good as all his exegetical input as well as his genre conventions; cf. also Orm's frequent references to *Latin boc*, 'a Latin book', and *þatt Latin boc*, 'the Latin book'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *latin boc*: P169 [P13], H1130, H6644, H8047, H10165, H10698, H16826, H18086; *þatt latin boc*: H1182, H4452, H16296.

As regards the gospel harmony side of *Orrmulum*, there were fewer models available, but the genre certainly did exist. An important work in this connection is Augustine's *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, in which Augustine discusses ways of explaining differences between the gospels in their presentation of events, and also presents his own attempt at a unified narrative text (covering the period before the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus) interspersed within the argumentative text. In the early parts (before the ministry of John and Jesus), the order of events as presented in *Orrmulum* agrees quite well with that in *De Consensu*; the discrepancies can be explained as Orm's modifications of the model provided by Augustine. From the calling of the first disciples onwards, however, Orm would not have received much support from Augustine. Several of Orm's homilies are based on gospel texts which are not even discussed in *De Consensu* (gospel texts xix, xxi, xxii, xxiv–xxx<sup>5</sup>).

In the 1140's Zacharias Chrysopolitanus provided Victor of Capua's sixth-century Latinisation of Tatian's gospel harmony with commentaries, primarily compilations from the church fathers, under the title *In Unum Ex Quatuor, sive de Concordia Evangelistarum Libri Quatuor* (for a discussion of *In Unum*, see Harris 1924a). As far as the chronology is concerned, it is not impossible that *In Unum* was known to Orm, and that the existence of this gospel harmony with exegetical comments (if not in homily form) may have suggested to Orm the possibility of writing the kind of work he did. The sequential presentation of narrative elements in the gospels in *In Unum* agrees very well with *Orrmulum* (with some minor discrepancies, but the fit is somewhat better than for *De Consensu*) as far as the calling of the first disciples (Homily xxii). From there on, however, the presentation differs considerably from the order of presentation of events in the *Orrmulum*, and we must conclude that, with the possible exception of chapters II–XVII, *In Unum* cannot have served as Orm's model.

For lack of evidence to the contrary, the conclusion must be that Orm worked out his own gospel harmony,<sup>6</sup> with little or no support from *De Consensu* or *In Unum*.

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<sup>5</sup> Gospel text xxix, *In principio erat verbum*, is treated by Augustine (Caput IV), but does not occur at the same position in the sequence as in *Orrmulum*.

<sup>6</sup> Unless, that is, Clement of Llanthony's twelfth-century gospel harmony *Concordia Quatuor Evangelistarum* provided a model for the sequential order of Orm's *goddspell*s. It was much copied in the late Middle Ages, and even translated into Middle English in the fourteenth century, but no modern edition seems to be available, so that avenue has to be left unexplored for the time being. For a discussion of Clement's gospel harmony, see Harris 1924b.

## 3 Textual organisation

### 3.1 Form

The running text of *Ormmulum*, whether prefatory matter or homilies, is very clearly structured. Some of the marking of this structure was suppressed in Holt 1878, which is still the standard edition of the text. For the benefit of readers familiar with the text of *Ormmulum* only through Holt's edition a brief outline of the text structuring devices will be given here.

The smallest unit of text is the **verse**: a long verse of fifteen syllables is made up of an **on-verse** of eight syllables and an **off-verse** of seven syllables. In the manuscript the text runs on like prose, but the beginning of each verse is marked by an initial capital letter, bold in the case of on-verses and non-bold<sup>7</sup> in the case of off-verses. The end of each verse is marked by a punctuation mark, normally a punctus (.) or a punctus elevatus (:), as shown in the examples quoted in this paper. Holt prints the verse-initial capitals, but he suppresses the distinction bold/non-bold, and he introduces capitalisation in places where Ormm does not use it. The punctuation system is modernised in the 1878 edition.

The next larger unit of text is the **paragraph**, which is made up of one or more long verses and is marked by an initial *paragraphus*: ¶ in its basic form, with ¶¶¶¶ as more complex variants. Paragraphs are left completely unmarked in Holt's edition, which makes the text of *Ormmulum* appear as more poorly organised in the edition than it was in Ormm's holograph manuscript.

For the largest text unit, made up of one or more paragraphs, I use the term **fit**. It is marked by Ormm by means of an initial *littera notabilior*, a capital letter extending over two or more lines of writing. At the end of the fit Ormm often uses a *punctus versus* (;) or a *positura* (;:) instead of a *punctus* or *punctus elevatus*. In Holt's edition the *littera notabilior* is printed as no different from any other capital letter; instead, some new fits are marked by two blank lines inserted before the beginning of the fit. Hall (1920) is the editor who has come closest to doing justice to Ormm's marking of fits. Nevertheless, the extract of *Ormmulum* that Hall prints (part of the exegesis of Homily vii/viii, H3662–4009) contains eighteen fits, but Hall marks only two of those with a *littera notabilior*, and two more with a preceding blank line.

For the purpose of identifying the source material that Ormm used when he composed the exegetical parts of his homilies, the fit is an extremely

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<sup>7</sup> I use the terms bold and non-bold to refer to a contrast realised in the manuscript not only by the weight of the pen-strokes used, but in the case of several characters also by the shape of the letter, e.g. bold **ſ** versus non-bold **ſ**. In the printed text of *Ormmulum* I use bold and regular fonts to represent this contrast.

important unit and an essential level to work at, since Ormm tends to stay with one major source text throughout the fit. For a more detailed account of the role of the fit in the search for source texts for Ormmulum, see Johannesson 2007a.

### 3.2 Content: prefatory matter

As printed in Holt 1878, the prefatory matter of *Ormmulum* is made up of four parts: *Dedication*, *Preface*, *Texts* and *Introduction*. It is clear that such a division is based on a misunderstanding of the presentation of the text in Ormm's holograph manuscript. As was first pointed out by Matthes (1933: 35–37), and again by Burchfield (1956: 72, fn. 1), the text which occupies folio 9 recto and the first 25 lines of folio 9 verso (Holt's *Preface*) is marked by Ormm to be inserted after verse 156 of what Holt calls the *Dedication*, in line 39 on folio 3 verso, immediately before Ormm's explanation of what "goddspell" means.<sup>8</sup>

Once Holt's *Preface* is inserted in its proper place (where it fits seamlessly) and his *Introduction* is allocated to Homily i/ii (for the Introduction to a homily, see section 3.3 below), the prefatory matter of *Ormmulum* is reduced to one running text (Holt's *Dedication* + *Preface*) and one numbered list of Latin incipits of the gospel lections (Holt's *Texts*). The running text will here simply be referred to as the Preface of *Ormmulum*. Part of the Preface is a reworking of Latin exegetical material. At the exegetical centre of the preface, the gospels are likened to a four-wheeled quadriga, with the four gospel texts making up the four wheels. This somewhat bizarre metaphor is taken over wholesale<sup>9</sup> from the *Prologus* to Honorius Augustodunensis' *Expositio in Cantica Cantorum* from the 1140's. The gospels are further said to express seven sacraments, or "godnesses" (P286 [D180]), which Christ has conferred/will confer on mankind: (1) the Incarnation, (2) the Baptism, (3) the Passion, (4) the Harrowing of Hell, (5) the Resurrection, (6) the Ascension and the Sending of the Holy Ghost, (7) the giving of the heavenly bliss to the deserving souls on Judgement Day. This description of the gospels is lifted more or less unchanged (apart from translation and versification) from the *Prologus* to Paschasius Radbertus' *Expositio in Evangelium Matthaei* from the ninth century. For a detailed analysis of these parts of the Preface, see Johannesson 2007b.

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<sup>8</sup> The *signes de renvois* on folio 9 verso, marking the text to be inserted, and on folio 3 verso, marking the point of insertion, can both be seen as representing a basic T-shape, yet they are vastly different: where the former is tall and narrow, the latter is low and broad. Still it is clear that they actually mark text insertion.

<sup>9</sup> It seems safe to assume that Ormm knew nothing about a genuine Roman quadriga, which had two wheels but was drawn by four horses, but just accepted the description provided by his source text.

More interesting, however, are those parts of the Preface to *Orrmulum* which are not reworkings of concrete textual sources, but rather constitute Orm's original writing within the framework of traditions current in the twelfth century. The Preface turns out to combine features of two contemporary text genres. On the one hand it has all the typical features of a Ciceronian *praefatio*, detailing the author's relationships to various other persons: to his patron, to the corrector of the text, to his copyist(s), to future readers/detractors, and, finally, to God. Orm first addresses his patron and threefold brother (in the flesh, in the faith, and in the order) Walter and declares (with conventional expressions of modesty) that he has completed the task Walter set him: he has, with the little wit the Lord has given him, translated the gospel's holy doctrine into English, because Walter thought it would be beneficial to the souls of Englishmen to have access to the gospels in their own language. He then goes on to outline the structure of his work and his translation principles; he exhorts Walter to check the work for unorthodox doctrine and warns against detractors who will scorn their work; he commands future copyists to copy his text faithfully, down to the details of his spelling system with doubled consonants marking a preceding short vowel in the the same syllable; he explains again why he has carried out the work, namely in order that the souls of English people may be saved; as a reward from God for his labour he expects his own salvation.

On the other hand, Orm's presentation of various features of his text (such as the title of the work, the name of the author, author's intention, material used, method and order of presentation, and the utility of the work) makes his Preface conform to the conventions of the standard form of introduction to works of scriptural exegesis in the twelfth century (a "type C prologue", in the terminology of Minnis 1984). Orm's application of these conventions offer unexpected insights into his self-image. When Honorius Augustodunensis wrote his *Prologus* to his commentary on the *Song of Solomon* in 1136, the Work is stated, conventionally, to be *Cantica canticorum* ('the Song of Solomon'), not Honorius' commentary, and the name of the author is, equally conventionally, "Spiritus Sanctus, loquens per vas sapientiae Salomonem" ('the Holy Spirit speaking through that vessel of wisdom, Solomon'; PL vol. 172, col. 0348C–D), not Honorius. Orm, by contrast, explicitly sets himself up as author (he both 'wrote and composed', "wrat. 7 wrohhte", the text), and *Orrmulum* as the Work in his petition for the readers' prayers, as shown in (2). In other words, Orm turns out to be considerably less modest than his choice of phrases in other parts of the Preface may suggest. For a detailed analysis of these aspects of Orm's Preface, see Johannesson 2007c.

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| (2) Icc. þatt tiss enngliss hafe sett.<br>Ennglisshe menn to lare:<br>Icc wass þær þær i crisstnedd wass. | 'I who have written this English<br>for the education of Englishmen,<br>I was, where I was baptised, |
|---|--|

Orrmin bi name nemnedd.	called Orrmin by name.
7 icc orrmin full innwardliḡ.	And I Orrmin very sincerely,
Wiþþ muþ. 7 ec wiþþ herrte.	with mouth and also with heart,
Her bidde þa crisstene menn.	here pray those Christian men
Þatt herenn oþerr réden.	that hear or read
Þiss boc: hemm bidde icc her þatt teḡḡ.	this book; them I pray here that they
Forr me þiss bede biddenn.	say this prayer for me:
7 Þatt broþerr þatt tiss enngliḡsh writt.	The brother who this English text
Allræresst wrát. 7 wrohhte:	first wrote and composed;
Þatt broþerr forr hiss swinnoc to læn:	may that brother, as a reward for his toil,
Sop blisse móte findenn.	attain true bliss.
Amæn.	Amen.'
	(P427–440 [D321–334])

The list of Latin *incipits* of the gospel texts is preceded by a short text in English (P441–448 [D335–342]) in which Orrm seems to pose as editor rather than author, in that he seems to be saying that he will set out a list of all the gospels that he ‘can find’ in this book (rather than all the gospels he included). The passage only makes sense if we interpret the verb *findenn* here as ‘to provide’, ‘to supply’; the same sense can also be found elsewhere in *Orrmulum* (“**T**o findenn all þatt æfre iss ned: /Abutenn godess allterr.”, ‘To supply all that ever is needed /At God’s altar’, H6136–7).

(3) 7 Þa goddspelless alle þatt icc.	‘All the gospels that I
Her o þiss boc maḡḡ findenn:	here in this book am able to supply,
Hemm alle wile icc nemmnenn her.	all of them will I mention here
Bi þeḡḡre firrste wordess.	by their first few words.
7 tāle wile icc settenn to.	And a number I will add
To don ḡuw tunnderrstandenn.	to make you understand
Hu fele sinnenn o þiss boc.	how many there are in this book
ḡoddspelless unnderr alle.	gospels altogether.’
	(P441–448 [D335–342])

### 3.3 Content: homilies

At the level of the individual homily, *Orrmulum* is a highly structured composition. With respect to content, a homily will here be described as made up of two or more **sections**. Table 1 below illustrates the overall organisation of a homily in terms of sections; the two obligatory sections in a homily are marked by asterisks.

Table 1. The structure of Orm's homilies

	SECTIONS
Homily:	Introduction (Text heading) *Text A (Text heading) Text B Transition *Exposition A Exposition B Coda Prayer

An **introduction** occurs at the beginning of Homilies i/ii, vii/viii, xvi/xvii, xxvii/xxviii, and xxx/xxxi.<sup>10</sup> Each introduction contains a specification of what Orm is going to narrate in the current homily; some of them also contain additional information serving to link the current gospel narrative to earlier ones or to provide a summary of events described in previous homilies. Some homilies which lack an introduction may nevertheless have the gospel text open with a passage which serves as a narrative transition. In the current analysis, such a transitional passage does not count as an introduction, since it lacks the authorial intrusion of the introduction.

The next item in a homily, the **text heading**, is not, strictly speaking, a section, but the number of the gospel lection followed by a reference to the relevant evangelist (e.g. *Secundum Lucam*) and the Latin *incipit* of the lection. Orm left space for these items, typically at the beginning of his rendering of the gospel text.<sup>11</sup> Occasionally Orm forgot to provide the space, occasionally he filled it with his textual changes or corrections. When the time came for scribe C to add the text heading, he consequently omitted or misplaced the heading, since it was not clear to him where it was to be placed.

The next section is the **gospel text**, made up of a lection from the Missal. In a standard homily there is just one gospel text, and the number of the homily is identical with the number of the gospel lection. In a two-text homily, the sequence Text heading + Gospel text is repeated, and the number of the homily is made up the numbers of the two gospel texts separated by a slash, e.g. homily i/ii.

<sup>10</sup> The beginnings (or the whole) of Homilies iii/iv, v, vi, ix, x, xiii, xxix, and xxxii have been lost, so it is not possible to tell whether these had introductions. Homilies xi/xii, xiv, xv, xviii, xix, xx, xxi, xxii, xxiii, xxiv, xxv/xxvi definitely have no introduction.

<sup>11</sup> In the case of gospel text xvi the text heading is actually placed before the introduction to the gospel text.

After the end of the gospel text(s) follows a **transition**, which states explicitly that the gospel ends there and that the exposition will follow; a typical example is shown in (4). Some transitions originally did not start with *Her endeþþ*, but were later revised to achieve greater uniformity of expression (5). Likewise, transitions which did not originally acknowledge the presence of two gospel texts in the homily were later modified to take this fact into account (6).

- (4)  $\int$  Her endeþþ nu þiss goddspell þuss. ‘Here now this gospel ends thus,  
 $\tau$  uss birrþ itt þurrhsekenn. and we ought to seek it through,  
 To lokenn whatt itt læreþþ uss: to see what it teaches us  
 Off ure sawle nede. for the good of our souls.’  
 (Transition of Homily xix, H10684–87)

- (5)  
 « $\int$  Nu wile icc shæwenn  $\int$ uw summ del:  $\int$  Her endeþþ nu þiss goddspell þuss.  
 Whatt tiss goddspell  $\int$ uw læreþþ.»  $\tau$  icc  $\int$ uw wile shæwenn.’  
 Hu mikell god itt læreþþ  $\int$ uw: Hu mikell god itt læreþþ  $\int$ uw:  
 Off  $\int$ ure sawless nede. Off  $\int$ ure sawless nede.  
 ‘Now I will show you to some extent ‘Here ends now this gospel thus  
 what this gospel teaches you, and I will show you  
 how much good it teaches you how much good it teaches you  
 for the good of your souls.’ for the good of your souls.’  
 (Transition of Homily x, original (left) and revised (right), H6514–17)<sup>12</sup>

- (6)  
 « $\int$   $\tau$  her icc wile shæwenn  $\int$ uw:  $\int$  Her endenn twa goddspellless þuss.  
 Whatt tiss goddspell  $\int$ uw læreþþ.  $\tau$  uss birrþ hemm þurrhsekenn.  
 O whillke wise itt wisseþþ  $\int$ uw: To lokenn whatt te $\int$  lærenn uss.  
 To berr $\int$ enn  $\int$ ure sawless. » Off ure sawle nede.’  
 ‘And here I will show you ‘Here end two gospels thus  
 what this gospel teaches you, and I will show you  
 in what way it instructs you to see what they teach us  
 how to save your souls.’ for the good of our souls.’  
 (Transition of Homily vii/viii, original (left) and revised (right), H3490–93)

Depending on the number of gospel texts in the homily, the transition is followed by one or two **exposition(s)**, where Orm provides the exegesis of the relevant gospel text(s).

A few homilies end with a **coda**, which takes the reader back from the level of scriptural exegesis to the level of gospel narrative, typically summarising the events narrated in the gospel text(s) of the current homily, as in the coda of Homily xvi/xvii:

<sup>12</sup> The following symbols are used in examples (5)–(6): « » enclose deleted characters (cancelled with a pen stroke), and ‘ ’ enclose marginal additions.

- (7) **ƿ** Þuss fundenn alle att sannt iohan: ‘Thus all found from St John  
 Ʒod lare off þeƷƷre nede. good teaching for their need.  
**7** tatt nass wunderr þwertt út nan. And it was certainly no wonder  
 þatt he wass wis o lare. that he was wise in teaching,  
**F**orr he wass full off haliƷ Ʒast: for he was full of the Holy Ghost  
 Ær þann he borenn wære. even before he was born,  
**S**wa summ þe ƷoddsPELLwrihte seƷƷþ: as the evangelist says  
 þatt þwertt út nohht ne leƷeþþ: who certainly tells no lie.’  
 (H10243–50)

Each homily concludes with a brief **prayer**<sup>13</sup> (typically four, occasionally six, verses), which contains some reference to the major topic of the homily. Thus the prayer at the end of Homily xvi/xvii, which deals with the preaching of John the Baptist, runs as follows:

- (8) **ƿ 7** godd allmahhtiƷ lefe uss swa. ‘May God Almighty permit us thus  
 To fillenn. 7 to follƷenn. to fulfil and to follow  
**Þ**e lare off sannt iohanes spell. the doctrine of St John’s preaching  
 7 all hiss hallƷe bisne: and all his holy example,  
**S**wa þatt we motenn borrhenn ben. so that we may be saved  
 Att ure lifess ende. AMEN; at our life’s end. Amen.’  
 (H10251–56)

## 4 Conclusion

*Ormmulum* repays close study. The text has been available in printed form since 1852, and its status as a cross between a homiliary and a gospel harmony (section 2 above) must have been obvious to any reader familiar with genres of Christian writing in the twelfth century. By contrast, the status of Orm’s Preface as a cross between a Ciceronian *praefatio* and a “type C prologue” (section 3.2 above) went unnoticed until the pilot studies for my current source text project failed to find sources for most of the Preface and it became necessary to look for a different type of framework, such as genres of contemporary Latin exegetical writing, to find an explanation of the properties of Orm’s Preface.

The textual organisation, by contrast, has been largely hidden from readers of the standard editions (White 1852, superseded by Holt 1878). As it turns out, the formal markings of structural units in the manuscript are essen-

<sup>13</sup> Occasional prayers (later deleted) may also conclude major parts of an exposition, as in Homily i/ii and Homily ix, or separate Exposition A from Exposition B, as in Homily xxv/xxvi.

tial for an appreciation of the internal organisation of the text, and hence for an appreciation of how the author carried out his intentions when composing his text.

In addition, the recognition of the hierarchy of textual units (verse, paragraph, fit) is an essential first step towards a meaningful analysis of the author's use of source texts.

The moral of all this is clearly addressed at text editors: whatever structural marking there is in a manuscript should not be suppressed but clearly presented one way or another in the printed edition.

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