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Citation	Kidd, Peter. 2011. An unnoticed photograph at Houghton Library; or, Unknown leaves from the Library of Raphael de Marcatellis. Harvard Library Bulletin 21 (1-2), Spring-Summer 2010: 143-152.
Citable link	http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:42669012
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An Unnoticed Photograph at Houghton Library; or, Unknown Leaves from the Library of Raphael de Marcatellis

Peter Kidd

THIS IS A STORY ABOUT THE USE OF SURROGATES AND WHAT SCHOLARS and students might miss by ignoring them. Anyone who has frequented special collections departments during the past decade or two will be aware that the number of people wanting to consult manuscript material has increased significantly during this period. This development is of course to be welcomed, so long as the increased use of material does not significantly increase the rate of its physical deterioration through *unnecessary* wear and tear. Because users of such material typically consult manuscripts relatively briefly, and often only once, they usually do not see the material at intervals over a long period of time, and therefore are not aware of the deterioration that may be evident to curators who work with the material year after year. This is one reason why numerous libraries have enthusiastically embraced the possibilities offered by digitization. Offering high-quality surrogates should allow more students convenient access to manuscripts (often through online electronic resources), and simultaneously save the originals from unnecessary handling.

Most users of medieval manuscripts have apparently never had any formal training in issues relating to preservation or conservation, show no awareness of the fundamentally different properties of different types of book-structure, and have presumably never been shown how to handle books except perhaps by their own academic teachers, who were probably self-taught many years before the greatly increased physical demands placed on collections of manuscripts made preservation the more serious issue that it is today. Most educated people are aware that there are sound reasons why they are not allowed to touch the artworks in museums and art galleries: they know that touching objects, even with clean hands, causes cumulative damage. But despite an awareness that handling any object made of organic materials unavoidably causes incremental deterioration, some researchers are very unwilling to consult surrogates as a preliminary to studying original manuscripts. It is obvious to everyone—including librarians and curators—that surrogates do not convey as much information as an original manuscript, but for many kinds of work a surrogate is adequate. Microfilm may be used, to list just a few examples, for textual collation;

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iconographic identification; checking for the presence/absence of particular textual or decorative features; gaining a far better understanding of the script, layout, and decoration than any written description could provide; recognizing distinctive scribal hands with which one is familiar; studying scribal hands with which one is not familiar; elucidating provenance based on bookplates, inscriptions, heraldry, etc.; and mundane tasks such as the checking of folio references. For investigating a variety of codicological features, microfilm is also an effective resource: paper and parchment may be distinguishable; the ruling-pattern may be visible and the ruling medium apparent; the loss of leaves may be deducible from gaps in the text; and a complete accurate physical collation may even be possible if catchwords and/or leaf signatures survive. I hope no one would deny that microfilm may be used for all these purposes, and more.¹

In some cases, a surrogate can even be infinitely preferable to an original manuscript: for example, someone studying the iconography of historiated initials in thirteenth-century pocket-sized bibles could work far more effectively with a set of 10 x 8 in. photographs representing just the pages with initials, instead of having to turn all the fiddly pages of the original tiny volume. Even when they are ultimately inadequate (no one would deny their limitations), surrogates can usually be helpful in preparing the researcher to consult the original more productively.²

This preamble, and most of what follows, is written largely in the hope that it will encourage those who study manuscripts to reconsider whether they could make more use of available surrogates—and not only those that are in color, or high-quality, or digital, or online. It would usually be unwise to publish an article about a manuscript without having seen the original, but in this case an exception can perhaps safely be made, because it hinges entirely on what can be deduced from a single old black and white photograph.

1 For a contrary view, see article signed “R. McK.,” “Working in Major Manuscript Collections: Some Observations,” *Gazette du livre médiévale* 22 (printemps 1993): 1–7, esp. 3: “Microfilm is a very poor substitute for the real thing in terms of legibility. More seriously, *all palaeographical and codicological analysis is rendered totally impossible*” (emphasis added). The limitations often lie with the scholar rather than with the medium, however; I have personally witnessed an eminent manuscripts specialist who, confronted with a series of original manuscripts, was unable to distinguish between those on parchment and paper, because his own work exclusively concerned early medieval codices and he was therefore unfamiliar with medieval paper.

2 The cost of buying microfilms or other reproductions may seem expensive to the student, but they are usually extremely cost-efficient compared to the expense of traveling long distances to see an original, and they also provide permanent raw visual source-material in the scholar’s personal collection to aid future research and publication.

During a brief visit to Harvard I had less than a full day to visit Houghton Library.³ There were several projects that I was working on at the time, but no particular manuscripts that I especially needed to examine. Instead, I hoped to be able to identify some manuscripts relevant to my various interests that I might study more closely on a later occasion. One way of doing this—adopted by many researchers when they visit manuscript collections, especially in the early stages of their research—would have been to trawl the various finding-aids and ask to see all the manuscripts that seemed promising. But even if I were promptly given every manuscript I requested, there would not have been time to examine many; this is one of the situations in which surrogates can have significant advantages over originals. I therefore instead asked to consult the ring-binders of black-and-white photographs of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts that were formerly kept on the open shelves in the reading room and are now available on request at the main staff desk.⁴ Each binder only requires a few minutes to leaf through, so it was possible for me to consult the first fifty binders during the afternoon, representing a few hundred different manuscripts. By doing this it was possible to make some satisfying provenance identifications in a short space of time: MS Typ 2 and MS Typ 47 both have the arms of Mario Maffei (1463–1537) of Volterra and can thus be added to the known corpus of surviving books from his important library;⁵ MS Typ 91 has the arms of Angelo Fasolo (d. 1491), bishop of Feltre, and is by the same scribe as another dated and signed manuscript made for Fasolo;⁶ and MS Typ 95 includes a distinctive monogram formed of the letters *L Y S* (see figures 1 and 2), which identifies it as a manuscript made for Raphael de Marcatellis (or Mercatellis).

Marcatellis (1437–1508) was an illegitimate son of Philip the Good (1396–1467), Duke of Burgundy, whose aristocratic connections enabled him to obtain elevated

3 I am grateful to Lillian Randall and William Stoneman for making the visit possible and enjoyable, and to Jeffrey Hamburger for guiding this paper, originally submitted in 2007, into print.

4 In 1980 with funding from the Kress Foundation and from the National Endowment for the Humanities, microfilms of the library's medieval and Renaissance manuscripts were made along with black and white photographs and color slides of 3,000 miniatures and important initials, and copies of the photographs were made available in the binders in the reading room. They were withdrawn from the open shelves presumably in part because they were little-used, and they have subsequently been superseded by digital copies of the slides made with funding from the National Endowment of Humanities through Digital Scriptorium: <<http://www.digital-scriptorium.org>> (accessed June 1, 2010).

5 See B. L. Ullman, "Codices Maffeiiani," in *Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1955), 373–382; and José Ruysschaert, "Recherche des deux bibliothèques romaines Maffei des XVe et XVIe siècles," *La Bibliofilia* 60 (1958): 306–333. Descriptions and images of several Maffei manuscripts can be found on the British Library's online Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts: <<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/>> (accessed June 1, 2010).

6 This manuscript was on loan to the British Library from 1949 to 2006, when it was withdrawn and sold at Christie's, London, June 7, 2006, lot 29, with a color plate in the catalog.



Figure 1. Monogram of *LYS* from Houghton Library MS Typ 95, fol. 144v. Detail from black and white photograph described in note 4.

ecclesiastical posts: aged only twenty-six he became abbot of Oudenburg in West Flanders (1463–1478), then abbot of St Bavo in Ghent (1478–1507), and finally bishop “ex partibus” of Rhodus in Cilicia (1487–1507). He was arguably the single most important Netherlandish humanistic bibliophile: “His consecration as bishop . . . was the culmination of a brilliant career that brought him wealth and political connections, and allowed him to indulge in his limitless passion for books at the expense of almost everything else, especially of his ecclesiastical duties.”⁷ In addition to the evidence provided by surviving manuscripts that bear his marks of ownership, his library can be reconstructed on the basis of two inventories of the second half of the sixteenth century, known in the scholarly literature as the *Index* of 1572, and the somewhat earlier *Recollectorium*, both of which have been published, and both of which we will refer to

7 Albert Derolez, “Early Humanism in Flanders: New Data and Observations on the Library of Abbot Raphael de Mercatellis († 1508),” in *Les humanistes et leur bibliothèque: Actes du Colloque international / Humanists and their Libraries; Proceedings of the International Conference; Bruxelles, 26–28 août 1999*, ed. Rudolf de Smet (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 37–57, at 38.



Figure 2. De somno et vigilia; Commentarius in librum de anima.
Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University, Houghton Library,
MS Typ 95, fol. 144v. 44 x 34 cm. Gift of Agnes Mongan, 1954.

again.⁸ More recently his manuscripts have been the subject of a monograph,⁹ a PhD dissertation,¹⁰ a master's thesis,¹¹ and numerous articles.¹² His library is thus perhaps as widely and well-known today as that of any medieval bibliophile excepting the Duc de Berry and the Dukes of Burgundy, and it is thus remarkable that the origin of the Houghton leaves had not been recognized before.

Using only the single black and white photograph showing the verso of the leaf with the Marcatellis *L Y S* (see figure 2), one can see that the manuscript is written in a hybrid gothic script, in two columns of fifty-seven lines with glosses to the left of each column. A partial border in a northern French or southern Netherlandish style is painted around the glosses, and was thus clearly executed after them. The running-title and rubric reveal that the main text is book 1 of Aristotle's *De somno et vigilia*.¹³ Further surrogates would later reveal that four of the seven leaves which comprise MS Typ 95 are foliated in medieval arabic numerals in the top right corner "141," "144," "149," and "152," and are from books 1 and 2 of *De somno et vigilia*, while the other three

8 K. G. van Acker, "De librij van Raphael de Mercatellis, abt van Sint-Baafs en bisschop van Rohenen," *Archives et bibliothèques de Belgique / Archief- en Biblioteekwezen in België* 48 (1977): 143–198.

9 Albert Derolez, *The Library of Raphael de Marcatellis, Abbot of St. Bavon's, Ghent, 1437–1508* (Ghent: E. Story-Scientia Ltd., 1979); reviewed by J. J. G. Alexander in *Medium Ævum* 50 (1981): 324–325.

10 Alain Arnould, "The Art Historical Context of the Library of Raphael de Marcatellis" (Diss., University of Ghent, 1992).

11 Saskia van Bergen, "De productie van handschriften rond 1500, bestudeerd aan de hand van twee handschriften vervaarigd voor Raphael de Mercatellis, abt van de Sint-Baafabdeij te Gent en nu bewaard als Gent, U.B., hsn. 11 en 17" (Thesis, University of Groningen, 1998).

12 Among them are A. Pinchart, "Bibliothèque manuscrit de Raphael de Mercatel, abbé de Saint-Bavon," *Le bibliophile belge* (1872): 21–34; van Acker; Albert Derolez, "The Copying of Printed Books for Humanistic Bibliophiles in the Fifteenth Century," in *From Script to Book: A Symposium*, ed. Hans Bekker-Nielsen et al. (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986), 140–160; Derolez, "Nieuwe gegevens in verband met de ateliers van Raphaël de Mercatellis," in *Miscellanea Neerlandica: Opstellen voor Dr. Jan Deschamps*, ed. Elly Cockx-Indestege and Frans Hendrickx, 2 vols. (Leuven: Peeters, 1987), 1:479–503; Derolez, "Un nouveau manuscrit de la bibliothèque de Raphael de Mercatel," in *Litterae Medii Aevi: Festschrift für Johanne Authenrieth zu ihrem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Michael Borgolte and Herrad Spilling (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1988), 301–308; Derolez, "Copying Problems in a Plutarch Manuscript of Raphael de Marcatellis," in *Boeken in de late Middeleeuwen: Verslag van de Groningse Codicologendagen 1992*, ed. Jos M. M. Hermans and Klaas van der Hoek (Groningen: E. Forsten, 1994), 15–24; Derolez, "A Survey of the Mercatel Library on the Basis of the Early Catalogues and the Surviving Manuscripts," in *Als Ich Can: Liber Amicorum in Memory of Professor Dr. Maurits Smeyers*, ed. Bert Cardon et al., 2 vols., Corpus of Illuminated Manuscripts 11–12, Low Countries Series 8–9 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 1:545–564. Several more articles are listed in the last-mentioned.

13 "Liber Primus De Sompno et Vigilia," "Incipit secundus tractatus primi libri de sompno et vigilia . . ."

are foliated “24,” “59,” and “90,” and have a running-title that identifies their text and author: “Commentum Alberti Magni in liber de anima.”¹⁴ From the very brief published description of the leaves one can learn that they are unusually large, at approximately 44 x 34 cm. in size.¹⁵ These physical data, along with the clear evidence of Marcatellis provenance, are ample to allow one to identify these leaves with absolute confidence as having come from a now-incomplete volume of Albertus Magnus’s commentaries on Aristotle, which was no. 61 in the *Recollectorium*¹⁶ and no. 95 in the 1572 *Index*. Most of this manuscript is now MS 82-7-14 in the Biblioteca Capitular y Colombina, Seville.¹⁷ Thanks to Prof. Albert Derolez, I was put in contact with Prof. Dra. Elena E Rodríguez Díaz, who has prepared an unpublished description including a detailed codicological analysis of the Seville manuscript, and with Dra. D^a María Carmen Álvarez Márquez, who has prepared a detailed textual description.¹⁸ From these one can see that the Houghton Library leaf foliated “24” was the final leaf in quire 3 of the parent manuscript; folio “59” was the third leaf in quire 8; folio “90” was the second leaf in quire 12; folios “141” and “144” were formerly the third bifolium in quire 18 (of which no other leaves are known to survive); and folios “149” and “152” were formerly the third bifolium in quire 19.

The Seville manuscript bears a colophon-like inscription “Hoc volumen comparauit Raphael de Marcatellis, Dei gratia episcopus Rosensis, abbas Sancti Bauonis, iuxta Gandauun, anno Domini 1488,” but inscriptions such as this in Marcatellis manuscripts cannot be taken at face value, as the dates they contain are often contradicted by heraldic or other internal evidence.¹⁹ In the present case, one can say that the manuscript was perhaps produced not in 1488, but between 1481 and 1487: it probably post-dates 1481 because the first two texts seem to be copied from the edition printed in Venice in that year,²⁰ and it may pre-date 1487 because it bears Marcatellis’s arms as abbot of St Bavo, but not as bishop of Rhosus.

14 Since I saw the black and white photograph in 2006, the seven Harvard leaves have been digitized and made available online both via Harvard’s HOLLIS catalog <<http://hollis.harvard.edu/>> (accessed February 22, 2011), and the Digital Scriptorium.

15 C. U. Faye and W. H. Bond, *Supplement to the Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada* (New York: Bibliographical Society of America, 1962), 257–258.

16 Where it is described as “Commentum Alberti Magni [super] libris de anima et sensu et sensato et me[theorum, in se]rico damascene.”

17 The manuscript is described briefly in Charles H. Lohr, “Aristotelica Hispalensia,” *Theologie und Philosophie* 50 (1975): 547–564, esp. 563–564; it is discussed, described, and one page is reproduced by Derolez, “Early Humanism in Flanders,” 48, 54–55 (appendix 2), and 57 (pl. 2); and it is listed in Derolez, “A Survey of the Mercatel Library,” 556, no. R.61.

18 I am grateful to them both for generously sharing their unpublished work with me.

19 Derolez, *The Library of Raphael de Marcatellis*, 19–25.

20 Derolez, “Early Humanism in Flanders,” 54.

How the manuscript reached Seville is uncertain, but it seems unlikely to be pure coincidence that three other manuscripts from Marcatellis's library are now in the same Spanish city, and that of these, two others also contain Aristotle texts or commentaries.²¹ It has been suggested that, like many manuscripts in the Biblioteca Capitulare y Colombina, the manuscript was owned by Fernando Colon (1488–1539),²² because it bears the inscription "RRR-400-6," a form of call-mark characteristic of manuscripts from Colon's library. This would mean that it left the Marcatellis library and reached Spain within a couple of decades of Marcatellis's death. But this presumably cannot be the case, as the manuscript was apparently still with most of the other Marcatellis manuscripts in St Bavo's, Ghent, when the 1572 *Recollectorium* was drawn up,²³ so another later route to Spain must be sought.

In 1629 three manuscripts from Marcatellis's library were offered to Count Olivares (d. 1645), a Spanish bibliophile, in the hope of eliciting a reciprocal advantage from the Spanish king, and in 1680 a large number were sold, of which at least some were probably bought by the Spanish statesman Don Gaspar de Haro y Guzman (1645–1687).²⁴ Perhaps the Seville-Harvard manuscript found its way to Spain in a similar way.

So much for the history of the manuscript. What of its future? The seven Houghton leaves were given to Harvard in 1955 by Agnes Mongan (1905–1996), who was at that time Assistant Director of the Fogg Art Museum,²⁵ and although she may have acquired them in Europe, it is equally possible that she obtained them from an American source. As recently as the 1990s another leaf missing from the same volume, the original folio 134, was identified in the possession of the dealer Bruce Ferrini of Akron, Ohio, from whom it was bought for presentation to Ghent University Library.²⁶ It has not been possible to ascertain where Mongan and Ferrini acquired their leaves, but it is very probable that further leaves exist, unidentified, in American collections, and it is likely that further leaves—about forty are still unaccounted for—will turn up in east coast and midwest collections. Perhaps none of them will have anything as obvious as Marcatellis's arms or monogram to help in its identification, and without

21 On which see María José del Castillo, "Los códices de Mercatelli conservados en la Biblioteca Universitaria de Sevilla (Mss. 332/156./155./154.)," *Historia, Instituciones, Documentos* 6 (Seville, 1979): 33–48 and figs. I–XI; and Derolez, *The Library of Raphael de Marcatellis*, nos. 14, 17, and 32.

22 Derolez, "Early Humanism in Flanders," 55.

23 Of the other three manuscripts now in Seville, at least one seems to be described in the *Recollectorium* and another in the *Index*.

24 Many of these went to the Augustinians of Lyon, and from thence to the library of Lord Coke, Earl of Leicester, of Holkham Hall, Norfolk, and will be included in the forthcoming catalog of manuscripts at Holkham by Suzanne Reynolds.

25 On Agnes Mongan, see *Harvard University Gazette*, September 19, 1996. <<http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/1996/09.19/AgnesMonganDies.html>> (accessed February 22, 2011).

26 It is now Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, ms. 4179.

such clues the leaves look like rather unexceptional, though very large, provincial examples of late fifteenth-century book-production. Still, it is hoped that this article and its accompanying reproduction will help bring more of them to light.²⁷

27 During revision of this paper for publication in 2011, I identified another missing leaf of the manuscript, the original folio 36, in a German private collection.

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GUDE SUCKALE-REDLEFSEN worked as an art historian in the research project “The Image of the Black” of the Menil-Foundation. Later she published catalogs of the medieval illuminated manuscripts in the State Library of Bamberg. Author of numerous articles and essays on German manuscript illumination of the eleventh through thirteenth century, she has contributed to several facsimile-editions and exhibition catalogs.