

The Place of Germany in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Books, Scriptoria and Libraries

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1. Thomson, 'The Place of Germany in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance'. For the Twelfth-Century Renaissance in general, see the literature at 79 n. 1, above.

In recent years I have been attempting to grapple with the great problem of Germany's place in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance, a problem, as I have suggested elsewhere, not much addressed by modern scholarship, perhaps because it has been taken for granted that Germany lagged behind, followed in the wake of, or did not even try to emulate the achievements associated with the schools of Paris and early 'scholasticism'. According to this school of thought, Germany was 'off the pace', not 'at the cutting edge'. In a recent article I tried to offer some correctives to this view, and to characterize German cultural and intellectual life over the course of the long twelfth century.¹

In this paper I wish to address what might seem at first sight a simpler and narrower issue; yet it must be clarified and understood before further progress can be made on the larger one. From the late eleventh century Germany – by which I mean the Empire north of the Alps – experienced a prodigious growth in the revival and reform of religious communities and the founding of new ones. A fundamental component of this process was the expansion of ancient libraries and the making of new ones, both tasks

2. Heinzer, *Klosterreform und mittelalterliche Buchkultur in deutschen Südwesten*, 388.
3. See Appendix, pp. 141–4 below.

involving the copying of large – indeed astonishing – numbers of books, to a high standard of workmanship. Scholars in Germany and elsewhere have studied individual instances of this growth in the output of scriptoria and expansion of collections, but no-one, as far as I know, has drawn attention to the impressive scale and character of the phenomenon as a whole. Germany was perhaps in the forefront of the whole of Western Europe in book-production during the twelfth century, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The aim of this paper is to provide a ‘panorama’ of this production in order to validate these large generalizations, and to encourage further work in the field.

As I have already hinted, the motor was reform of the Church, along monastic or quasi-monastic lines: whether manifested in native movements such as those which radiated from Gorze and Hirsau, or imported like the Augustinian canons, Premonstratensians and Cistercians. Old houses were reformed and new ones founded. New books, for the liturgy and for meditative learnings were necessary in both cases. Networks of communities and individuals were formed to facilitate this. With respect to just one of these networks, that which radiated from Hirsau, Felix Heinzer has written: ‘Schrift und Buch beanspruchen ... einen hervorragenden Stellenwert’², a judgement that could be applied generally. In this movement an important contribution was made by literate, aristocratic women, both as members of self-standing nunneries and of the female community in double houses. No role was played by the emperors and only a little by the cathedrals and less by the lay aristocracy.

The evidence for the phenomenon is abundant in some localities, but overall extremely patchy and problematic. It falls into three categories. First, there are the booklists dating from the ‘long’ twelfth century (that is, between the late eleventh and early thirteenth centuries): not many overall, only some sixty-

one from forty-six centres.³ They are of different kinds, and very few of them are library-catalogues in the full sense, that is, listing all of a community's books for study and meditation: some are of liturgical books only, some list the donations of a particular individual, others the books used for the monastic or cathedral school. Not all are accessible in modern editions: Austria is fully covered, but only eleven of the forty-odd medieval dioceses of the remainder of the Reich north of the Alps. None of these editions, old or new, includes commentary identifying the titles or matching them with surviving volumes.⁴

Next come the surviving books, in numbers that vary hugely from place to place, the variation bearing almost no relation to the size, importance or longevity of the particular foundation. The need to identify the medieval provenances of as many extant books as possible is paramount for our enquiry, but this is not easily done. Fundamental are the lists in Sigrid Krämer's *Handschriftenerbe des deutschen Mittelalters*, but this was inevitably dependent upon information supplied by other printed material, often of indifferent accuracy.⁵ Very many relevant manuscript-collections still do not have up-to-date descriptive catalogues, without which accurate data as to dates, contents and provenance can hardly be collected. In addition, Krämer's definition of 'Germany' does not correspond to any medieval, let alone twelfth-century boundaries, but to those established in 1812.⁶ The German part of Switzerland, as well as Austria, are thus omitted from her inquiry.

Finally, there are in-depth studies of individual scriptoria and libraries, of which a number have been published in recent years, but still not many in comparison with all the localities that provide the requisite material.⁷ An exception is the Germanic area of Switzerland, completely covered, scriptorium by scriptorium, in Alfons Bruckner's splendid *Scriptoria Medii Aevi Helvetica*.⁸

4. Gottlieb, *Über mittelalterliche Bibliotheken* (henceforward Gottlieb); Becker, *Catalogi Bibliothecarum Antiqui* (henceforward Becker); Gottlieb et al., *Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskataloge Österreichs* (henceforward Bibl. Öst.); Lehmann et al., *Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskataloge Deutschlands und der Schweiz* (henceforward Bibl.), so far covering the southern dioceses of Augsburg, Bamberg, Chur, Eichstätt, Erfurt, Freising, Konstanz, Mainz, Passau, Regensburg and Würzburg; and Derolez and Victor, *Corpus Catalogorum Belgii: The Medieval Booklists of the Southern Low Countries* (henceforward CCB).

5. Krämer, *Handschriftenerbe des deutschen Mittelalters*. See for instance the corrections signalled by Hotchin, 'Women's Reading and Monastic Reform in Twelfth-Century Germany', 152 n. 42 and 158 n. 61. Survival rates of twelfth-century books for some houses in medieval

Bavaria are given by Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 78.

6. Krämer, Vol. 1, ix-x.

7. Apart from those cited below: Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*, though mainly dealing with the tenth and eleventh centuries; Dengler-Schreiber, *Skriptorium und Bibliothek des Klosters Michelsberg in Bamberg*, unaccountably ending her account c. 1150; Glassner and Haidinger, *Die Anfänge der Melker Bibliothek*; Houben, *St Blasianer Handschriften des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts*; Hoffmann, *Bücher und Urkunden aus Helmarshausen* und Convey; Krämer, 'Die Bibliothek von Ranshofen im frühen und hohen Mittelalter', (a study is needed of the contents of the thirty-nine surviving twelfth-century books from this Augustinian house); Mazal, 'Die Salzburger Domkapitelbibliothek vom 10. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert'; Pfaff, *Skriptorium und Bibliothek des Klosters Mondsee im hohen Mittelalter*; Wirtgen, *Die Handschriften des Klosters St.*

At first sight, the huge gaps in the evidence would seem to preclude absolutely the construction of a 'panorama', that is, a reasonably complete survey of book-production in twelfth-century Germany. But this is not necessarily so. The key to understanding what the situation really was is the booklists. In a few cases many of the books in them still survive, but in most cases this is not so. This tells us that the fact that a large or medium-sized medieval religious community is represented today by only a handful of books, or none at all, is due to the accidents of post-Reformation history, war and secularization, not because the community had hardly any books in the first instance. This in turn means that we can view the communities with large collections (represented by contemporary booklists, substantial numbers of surviving books, or both), as the norm, and extrapolate from them to assume collections of comparable size in other communities with similar populations and longevity but with few surviving books and no medieval booklists. Thus, we can use a relatively small number of cases to stand as representative of the whole. In what follows I describe such a sample, moving geographically from north to south and east to west, and covering the types of community most involved: reformed Benedictine houses and regular canons, male, female and double, including the 'new orders', above all the Cistercians.

I begin in the north, with the double house of reformed Augustinian canons at Hamersleben in Lower Saxony, founded in 1108, transferred to its present site – for the church still stands – in 1112.⁹ It was probably the earliest religious home of Hugh of St. Victor. Although only half-a-dozen twelfth-century books from Hamersleben survive, it must have quickly built up a great library, for ninety-three titles figure in its early thirteenth-century catalogue, and that is only of the school-books.¹⁰ It provides impressive evidence of the depth and

Fig. 25. Marburg, Hessisches
Staatsarchiv, MS H77, fol.
12r (detail, enlarged). First
leaf of the Lippoldsberg
library catalogue.

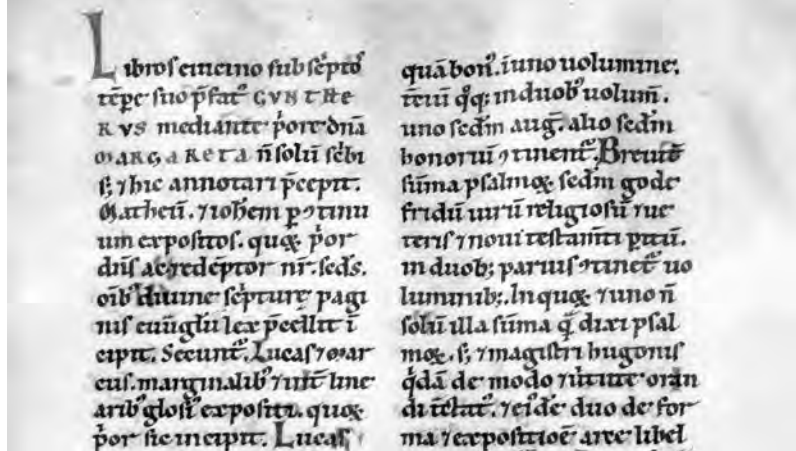


Fig. 26. Wolfenbüttel,
Herzog August Bibliothek,
Guelf. 204 Helmst., fol. 3v
(detail, enlarged), of 1178-91:
Lamspringe, script imitative
of the Hamersleben style.

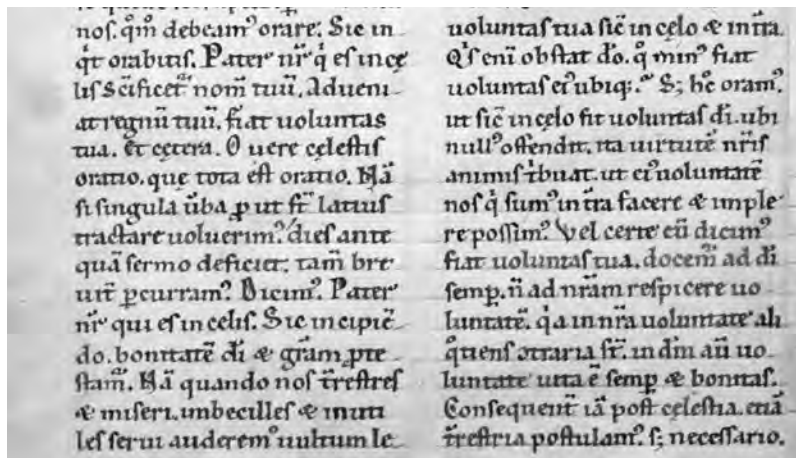
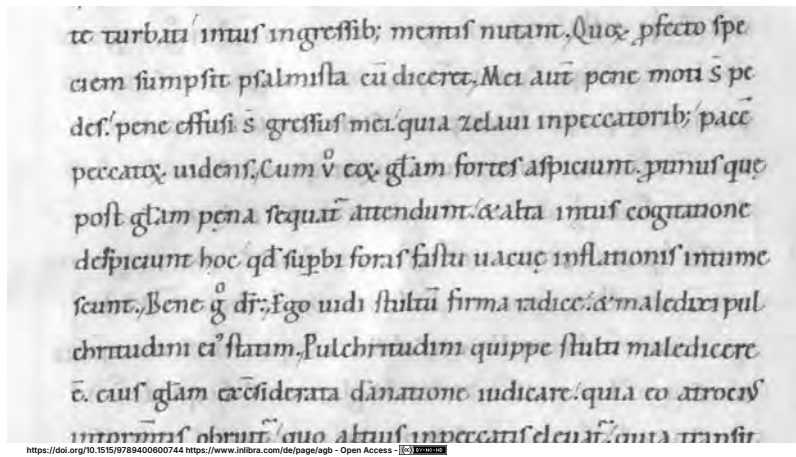


Fig. 27. Munich, Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm
22009, fol. 4v (detail,
enlarged). The hand of the
Wessobrunn anchoress and
scribe Diemut, c. 1100-50.



Hamersleben, and it is therefore no accident that the Hamersleben style of script recurs in books copied at Lamspringe in his time (Fig. 26/Plate 26).

Moving south, let us next consider the Augustinian house of Frankenthal near Worms, founded in 1119 by a local noble. Unfortunately, it has left no medieval booklists, and from the twelfth century only twenty-six manuscripts and four fragments.¹⁴ From them, however, can be inferred the active building of a considerable library in which the whole community participated. By exemplary meticulous autopsy of the surviving books Aliza Cohen-Mushlin has identified more than sixty scribes, individually active for periods of between five and twenty-five years, during the second half of the century. Some of these books were written in as many as fourteen hands: this was doubtless for practice, but also because the scribes, being also canons, had to break off copying in order to perform their liturgical duties. By 1148 the scribes were being trained in the cloister, and thereafter a sequence of masters and pupils can be identified. One canon/scribe, John, went to Paris, perhaps to study Canon Law, and stayed there for at least ten years before returning, probably in 1204/5, bringing with him books copied or obtained by him in the interval.

The large Benedictine double house of Zwiefalten, south-east of Stuttgart, was founded from Hirsau in 1089: in 1138 it comprised seventy monks, 130 lay brothers and sixty-two nuns; at least a hundred of its twelfth-century books are known to survive.¹⁵ A significant number of extant books have inscriptions by Ortlieb, local chronicler and librarian, who died 1140. The local necrology names two scribes who were members of the community, one a woman ‘conversa’ with the name of a noble house (Mahtilt de Nifen): ‘Ista multos libros sancte Marie conscripsit’. Noteworthy is the presence among

Reformkreises zur Zeit
Heinrichs des Löwen’;
Hotchin, ‘Women’s Reading
and Monastic Reform’, 167-
71; Cohen-Mushlin, *Scripto-
ria in Medieval Saxony*, 155-70;
Härtel, *Geschrieben und
Gemalt: Gelehrte Bücher aus
Frauenhand*.

14. What follows is based
upon Cohen-Mushlin, *A
Medieval Scriptorium*.

15. Löffler, *Die Handschriften des Klosters Zwiefalten* and Mews, 'Monastic Educational Culture Revisited'. Most of the manuscripts are in the Stuttgart Landesbibliothek; as publication of more volumes of its modern catalogue progresses more books of Zwiefalten provenance are likely to be identified.

16. Ruf, 'Die Handschriften des Klosters Schäftlarn' and Beach, *Women as Scribes*, Chapter 3.

17. Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 104-27.

18. What follows is based upon Beach, *Women as Scribes*, Chapter 4.

the surviving books of writings of Anselm of Canterbury, of a substantial number of glossed biblical books, and of texts associated with the school of Laon. Nonetheless, the contents and palaeography of the Zwiefalten books have yet to be studied in detail and Matilda's hand identified.

By contrast, Schäftlarn (south-west of Munich), was an ancient foundation, dating from 760, in ruins by 932, restored as a community of secular canons in the late tenth century.¹⁶ Made Premonstratensian by Bishop Otto of Freising in 1140, it was colonised from the double monastery of Ursberg in Swabia. Its library at the beginning of this process was small: forty-seven volumes figure in the catalogue of c. 1150, 'duo uetera matutinalia' suggesting that they included items from a much earlier period. More were added as a gift by the priest Arbo von Hebertshausen c. 1160-62. Many more were added by internal copying, instigated by Prior Henry (1164-1200), as can be recognized from the colophons naming him or specifying a date of production in his time. The total number of surviving twelfth-century Schäftlarn books is a respectable sixty-six. Thirteen of the scribes named themselves, three of them female; Alison Beach has studied the production of these women, Adelheid, Sophia and Irmingart.¹⁷ The sort of errors they made suggests that they were literate, not merely mechanical, copyists. Sophia worked closely with a male scribe, Adalbertus, who headed the scriptorium during the time of Prior Henry.

Not far away is Wessobrunn, another Benedictine foundation of the eighth century, refounded with secular canons until 1065-1110, when Prior Adalbero repopulated the house with monks from Regensburg and stayed on as abbot.¹⁸ About 1138 it gained a women's community and became part of the Hirsau reform; in 1161 Liutold of Hirsau arrived as abbot, bringing with him six of his monks. The community included an *inclusa*

named Diemut (d. 1130-50), who between c. 1100 and 1130 copied forty-seven volumes of which fourteen survive (Fig. 27/Plate 27). Some of these were produced in collaboration with two other nuns and the monk Lodevicus. Two lists of the books written by Diemut survive, one contemporary with her, the other from the late twelfth century: it seems that she concentrated on the patristic writings that were fundamental to the book collection in any religious community of the time. The later list occurs at the end of a twelfth-century copy of Sulpicius Severus (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm 22059); at the front, and in the same hand, occurs another booklist (see Fig. 28/Plate 28 and Fig. 29/Plate 29). It comprises 108 volumes including multiple copies: among them are liturgical books and 'libri scholastici': classical texts, grammar, rhetoric and dialectic. Headed 'Hi libri hic habentur', this list surely represents all of the Wessobrunn books not made by Diemut.¹⁹ In other words, the two lists in combination constitute what the library of Wessobrunn held at that date, a total of some 155 volumes. To some extent this figure is corroborated by two later lists of books, one of those that survived a fire in 1221 and another of the whole library c. 1240. Thirty-two twelfth-century Wessobrunn books are still in existence. This is a comparatively respectable total, but comparison with the number of books in the twelfth-century lists makes the point that numbers of surviving books are usually much less than what the booklists show to have originally existed.

Some 275 km to the west, and slightly south, of Wessobrunn is Rheinau in modern-day Switzerland, a ninth-century Benedictine house reformed from Hirsau in the early twelfth. Nearly 200 of its books survive, most of them in the Zürich Zentralbibliothek. Some are older than the house itself, often made elsewhere until the twelfth century, when uniformity of script and decoration indicates the beginnings of a scriptorium.

19. A point missed by the editors of *Bibl.*, 3, 60-2 and by Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 40-2.

A booklist from the late twelfth century lists the work of a single copyist, the monk Rudolf from Zürich: four books for study and meditation, three of them with glosses.²⁰ It is of interest that the style of the decorated initials in the Rheinau books can be paralleled at other monasteries reformed from Hirsau.²¹

Finally, moving east into central Austria, we encounter, for once in a way, a case of a medieval library that survives almost intact, though without any early catalogues. The great Benedictine house at Admont was founded in 1074 and reformed on the Hirsau pattern after 1115; between 1116 and 1120 a women's community was added.²² Just over 200 of its twelfth-century manuscripts survive, apparently mostly products of the local scriptorium (Fig. 30/Plate 30 and Fig. 31/Plate 31), though the collection has never been studied intensively or as a whole. As at Schäftlarn and Wessobrunn, so at Admont there is abundant evidence for full participation in book-production by the women's community. The Admont nuns are known to have been for the most part aristocratic, literate and trained in the liberal arts,²³ normally speaking Latin in the cloister, holding their own chapter, occasionally even preaching. The community had its own school, open to external students, in which were taught the basics such as grammar, but also biblical interpretation. Not surprisingly, this activity gained the house a reputation and attracted commissions from elsewhere. In 1162 Archbishop Eberhard of Salzburg presented Abbot Godfrey with copies of correspondence sent or received by the archdiocese since 1119. The monks recopied the letters into a book, adding many of their own. From twelfth-century Admont we can name five female scribes and ten male.²⁴ By late in the century each community had its own library and librarian, and one female scribe, Adelheit, was remembered in the monastery's necrology. Beach has assigned forty-seven surviv-

20. Bibl., Vol. 1, No. 60.

21. Bruckner, Vol. 4, 45-50 and Heinzer, 'Rheinauer Handschriften und die Hirsauer Reform'. For the 'Hirsau' decorative style

Bruckner refers to the plates in Löffler's *Romanische Zierbuchstaben und ihre Vorläufer* and *Schwäbische Buchmalerei in romanischer Zeit*.

22. Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 65-103 and Mews, 'Scholastic Theology'.

23. Beach, 'Voices from a Distant Land' and Lutter, *Geschlecht und Wissen, Norm und Praxis, Lesen und Schreiben*.

24. Stammberger, 'The Works of Hugh of St Victor at Admont', 235.

Fig. 31. Admont, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 672, fol. 41r (detail, enlarged). 'Bravura' formatting.

tia fluctuantes. his que in sacro eloquio
 de futuris primis bonorum ut penitus
 referuntur: nec omnino contra
 dicunt: nec prorsus acquiescunt.
 Vident enim in hoc mun-
 do quædam sic geri. ex quibus
 et dominum esse et hu-
 mana curare pos-
 sit intelligi.
 et quod cum
 talis ho-
 mi-

Fig. 32. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud. misc. 143, fol. 36v (detail, enlarged). A product of the Eberbach scriptorium, s. xii^{ex}.

[illegible][illegible]

ing books to the nuns' library. Monks and nuns collaborated in copying, including draft and finished versions of the sermons and biblical commentaries of Abbot Irimbert (1172–76). But the house was also keen to obtain copies of scholastic works written in France. Admont, SB, MS 593, contains Bernard of Clairvaux's *De Gratia et libero arbitrio*, preceded by Gilbert of Poitiers's commentary on Boethius's theological tractates and theological *sententiae* attributed to a Master Peter of Poitiers in a manuscript from (Cistercian) Zwettl. Two other manuscripts written at Admont contain copies of Abelard's *Theologia 'Summi boni'* and Thierry of Chartres's commentary on Boethius' *De trinitate*. The first shares an exemplar with a manuscript from another Cistercian house, Heilbronn, in which Abelard is described as 'master Peter, that most distinguished and learned man, with the nickname of "Adbaiolard"'.²⁵ Another contains a sentence-collection associated with the school of Laon, and the *Sentences* ascribed to Abelard. Of two closely-related and near-contemporary copies of this last text, one was at the Benedictine house of Prüfening before passing to the monastery of St Emmeram at Regensburg, the other at the Augustinian house of St Nikolaus vor Passau. Here we have evidence of 'networking' that actually overrode the boundaries between different religious Orders.

Here, also, two important points converge: that German religious communities were eager to acquire scholastic works written further west, and that very often new or reformed Cistercian houses were prominent in this process. We may take as an example Heiligenkreuz just south of Vienna, founded by Otto of Freising in the 1130s. Heiligenkreuz, SB, MS 153, a locally-made book of the mid twelfth century, contains Abelard's *Theologia 'Scolarium'* and reports of the teaching of Abelard, Hugh of St. Victor and other Paris masters of the 1120s.²⁶

25. Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 182 and

Mews, 'Scholastic Theology', 225 and n. 24.

26. Mews, 'Scholastic Theology', 221 and n. 14.

27. Palmer, *Zisterzienser und ihre Bücher*, Chapter 2 (1136–1221).

28. On the books of another Cistercian foundation, Maulbronn, 44 km northwest of Stuttgart, see Heiner, 'Maulbronn und die Buchkultur Südwestdeutschlands im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert'.

29. I wish to thank Erik Kwakkel for inviting me to give the first Liefstinck lecture, and Nigel Palmer for a critical reading of it.

Further north, not far from Frankfurt, lie the impressive physical remains of Eberbach, founded as an Augustinian house probably soon after 1110/11, Cistercian from 1136 when its population was 'seeded' with monks from Clairvaux.²⁷ About a quarter of its 195 surviving manuscripts were written between c. 1100 and the early thirteenth century, uniformity of script and decoration indicating that for a while there was an active local scriptorium (Fig. 32/Plate 32). But among the books dating from the late twelfth century are, once again, imported items, for instance Bodl. MS Laud. lat. 105, given by a Master Hugo, containing sermons and biblical commentaries by Maurice de Sully, Andrew of St Victor, Peter Lombard, Robert of Melun and a copy of Priscian, written at Paris at various times from the early twelfth century on.²⁸

The twelfth century was indeed a transformative period in the history of books and book-collections in Western Europe, no less in the German lands than elsewhere. Drawing together some of the threads of the foregoing discussion, it seems that 'reform' of an individual community was always closely followed by, indeed entailed, a sustained burst of activity in copying books, above all the works of the Fathers but also texts for training in the Liberal Arts; about 100 new books seems to have been the norm, their copying carried out by members of the community who were usually highly trained by a master scribe. As the century wore on, consciousness grew of the works of biblical study and dialectical theology being produced in and around Paris, and these were acquired and copied locally. By c. 1200 there must have been tens of thousands of books, copied in religious communities, across the whole of Germany, many times more than there had been a century earlier, and many times more than exist now.²⁹