



Thomas Haye and Johannes Helmrath, eds. *Codex im Diskurs. Wolfenbütteler Mittelalter-Studien* 25. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014. 272 p., ill. ISBN 9783447102551. €62.00 (hardcover).

This volume of tightly focused essays in German consists of papers that were originally presented at the second of three conferences on the history and theory of the medieval manuscript book at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Germany. As a whole, it addresses the question of how medieval and early modern scholars and authorities thought and expressed themselves about codices. The program, organized by the library's Medievalist Working Group, was dedicated to the manuscript culture of the era, its materiality and codical practice, and its key differences from the world of the printed book. The group pursued its topic well beyond the more familiar texts to include well-established historians of different fields, and literary and linguistic specialists. There are quotations in Latin, medieval German, and medieval French.

In terms of theory, the studies address the book on three dimensions: the *codicality* or materiality of the text, with its visual and tactile aspects; the "aura" of a book, its distinctive quality or essence; and finally the hermeneutical, the meaning of the text itself, the theory and methodology of text interpretation. Topics of discourse such as ownership marks, glosses and colophons, the forms of production, and the history of systematic codicology were woven into consideration in an effort to form a European overview through the prism of the history of the book.

The broad scope of the essays includes the literary (Minnesang in the Codex Manesse) and prophetic mystical texts with their existential and metaphorical book epiphanies (Book of Revelation, Hildegard of Bingen, and Mechthild of Magdeburg), as well as the codices of pragmatic scribality, such as the administrative records of towns (Regensburg city books) and the founding records of universities (Freiburg im Breisgau). There are lessons in how the discourse with manuscripts expanded with the Renaissance Humanists, who celebrated their intimacy with texts, using ownership as a tool for personal development (Petrarca).

The collection offers detailed explanation of how the scribality of the Humanist university teachers was rendered into orality in the classroom, then to be transmuted again into scribality with varying results by the individual early scholars, who in turn accompanied their lecture notes and quotations with further glosses from their solitary reading. The most ambitious scholars often became collectors of texts and notes by others, sometimes



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contributing these in time to the universities that fostered them. It is striking how the eventual separation of print and manuscript was delayed by their shared functionality in the oral practice of the university.

This volume, with its several thoughtful essays, has made an essential contribution to the study of the manuscript culture of the medieval and Renaissance eras, preeminently in central Europe but with valuable forays into France and Italy, and with likely applicability to the wider field of European studies. At the same time, one is conscious that the realities herein contained have corresponding roles at times in the present-day world of the printed book. The religious text manufactured on a press may likewise elicit a transcendent or magical experience in the reader, and the student who uses a printed monograph may also add his own glosses in the margins, even as these practices steadily escape from their traditional places onto electronic tablets, aural recording devices, and the cloud.

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