



Erik Kwakkel, ed. *Manuscripts of the Latin Classics 800-1200*. *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Book Culture*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2015. 224p., ill. ISBN 9789087282264. €39.50 (paperback).

This paperback presents six case studies of medieval manuscript copies of Latin works that were composed between the first century BCE and the fifth century CE. It is edited by the medieval book historian Erik Kwakkel who argues in his introduction (13-21) that, as material objects, these codices form a distinct group, since the Latin classics of both the Roman Republic (509-27 BCE) and the Roman Empire (27 BCE-295 CE) were taught in the schools of northern Europe. These Latin codices do not stand apart in their physical appearance and the circumstances of their manufacture within the wider context of medieval manuscripts from Christian Europe; they provide glimpses of what the papyrologist Roger Bagnall has called “the entire social dimension of the technology of writing” (“Materializing Ancient Documents,” *Daedalus* 145, no. 2, 2016, 82).

The volume is one of the outcomes of Kwakkel’s NOW-VIDI project, “[Turning over a New Leaf](#)” (conducted from 2010 to 2015), which explored changes in the manufacture and design of manuscripts as material evidence of the intellectual and cultural history of the twelfth century. Its case studies reveal how, between the Carolingian renaissance of the eighth and ninth centuries and the renaissance of the twelfth century, scholars developed “an array of strategies to produce, transmit, and apply ancient knowledge” (20). The articles by Marike Teeuwen (23-50, 193-196), Irene O’Daly (77-105, 198-203), and Rodney Thomson (169-185) originated as contributions to Kwakkel’s 2013 colloquium “Writing the Classics.” They share a gesture of inversion, as they highlight mostly overlooked textual and visual elements in order to move from questions about the canon’s formation to questions about its reception. Their authors do not ask which Latin works were known, but focus instead on how they were read. In her study of Carolingian codices, Teeuwen analyzes their marginal notes and markup as evidence of textual criticism. Learning aids are discussed in O’Daly’s survey of diagrams preserved in some manuscripts of *De inventio* by Cicero (106-43 BCE). Thomson uses commentaries and introductions ascribed to the English Benedictine monk William of Malmesbury (c.1090-c.1143) to suggest the latter’s familiarity with less-known works and authors, such as *De deo Socratis* by Apuleius (b. c.125 CE) and the bio-bibliographical sketch of Fulgentius Mythographus (fl. 500 CE).

The articles by Robert Babcock (53-74), Erik Kwakkel (107-129, 204-211), and David Gura

(131-166, 212-215) were specifically written for this volume. Babcock draws on florilegia to establish that in the tenth and eleventh centuries the poems of Tibullus (1st cent. CE) were studied in the diocese of Liège. Gura gleans from manuscripts of commentaries on Ovid (43 BCE-17 CE) the impact of Arnulf of Orléans (*fl.* 1175), a schoolmaster at the cathedral school of St. Euverte, on the reception of the *Metamorphoses* until the end of the fifteenth century. Kwakkel employs paleography and codicology in order to identify cost-saving strategies in manuscript manufacture. He analyzes a small composite manuscript (Leiden University Library, MS lat. VLO 92) to describe the use of parchment waste for the manufacture of small, low-grade booklets.

The intended readers of this attractively designed book, which contains almost no typographical errors, are fellow medievalists. It opens with a table of contents (5-6), followed by a list of figures and plates (7-8), the editor's preface (9), and a list of abbreviations (11). The volume concludes with notes on the contributors (187-189), followed by 22 plates (193-215), a manuscript index (217-218), and a general index (219-224). Full-page black/white details of manuscript pages serve as the visual teaser for the introduction (12) and the six case studies (22, 53, 77, 107, 130, 168). Their captions are found only on the list of figures, but neither this list nor the manuscript index includes details such as author names and book titles. Consequently, readers are never told that the volume's only figural illustration, which graces the outside covers in color and then reappears in black and white at the opening of Kwakkel's introduction (12), is a portrait of the satirist Persius (34-62 CE) from a tenth or eleventh-century Latin miscellany (Leiden BPL 82 fol. IV). Because the size of parchment scraps matters to Kwakkel's argument about low-grade codices (118-119), he is the only author to give manuscript dimensions (108, 120-122). With regard to his illustrations, Kwakkel relies on percentages to indicate the ratio between original and reproduction: e.g., "168% of true size" (208). This use of percentages indicates how unremarkable it has become to zoom in and out of digital facsimiles on our computer screens (cf. 120, n.27). Unfortunately, the manuscript index does not include the URLs of codices available as digital facsimiles, even though in some instances (e.g., 194 and 202) the original pages are so much reduced in size that the reproductions can convey little more than an impression of the *mise-en-page*.

Textbooks are a cross-cultural phenomenon in all literate societies with a written transmission of knowledge. They are characterized by a certain degree of standardization



and robust survival rates since they provide access to a society's required reading matter. As Kwakkel mentions in his introduction, most of the extant medieval manuscripts of the Latin classics were copied for use as textbooks in the course of formal education (16). From the perspective of early twenty-first-century print and digital cultures, though, the term "textbook" appears as an anachronism in research on medieval manuscripts; Kwakkel himself only uses the term once (15), and it is not included in the index. Textbooks are commonly associated with printing, as economies of scale and the commercial production of standardized texts are important characteristics of print culture. Intrepid print historians will enjoy this volume as a timely reminder of vigorous book use in medieval Christian Europe before the fifteenth-century advent of letterpress technology, when manuscripts were not necessarily created as unique artisanal objects, but also as ordinary, run-of-the-mill goods manufactured for the transmission of knowledge.

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