

Sinéad O’Sullivan/Ciaran Arthur (eds.): *Crafting Knowledge in the Early Medieval Book. Practices of Collecting and Concealing in the Latin West*. Turnhout: Brepols 2023 (Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin 16). 523 p., 26 ill., 22 tables. € 115.00/\$ 150.00. ISBN: 978-2-503-60247-9.

This collection of fifteen essays on early medieval manuscript culture represents the proceedings of a conference originally scheduled to meet in Belfast in June 2020. Disruptions caused by the global pandemic delayed the meeting until the following summer, when the contributors convened online to hear and discuss the papers published in this volume. In her introductory essay (“Collecting and Concealing in the Field of the World,” pp. 11–38), Sinéad O’Sullivan offers a preface to the book’s themes before providing a summary of the individual papers. She makes the strong case that “crafting knowledge” in the early Middle Ages was first and foremost an act of ‘collection’ that involved the copying of classical and patristic texts as well as the gathering and ordering of paratextual information that elucidated their meaning. O’Sullivan is an esteemed scholar of the reception of Prudentius’ *Psychomachia*, Martianus Capella’s *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, and other late ancient texts.<sup>1</sup> Her research has been instrumental for bringing the evidence of glosses to the center of the discussion of early medieval intellectual history.<sup>2</sup> Almost all of the papers in the volume treat this primary theme of the practice of *collectio*. The companion theme of ‘concealment’ is more difficult for the contributors to sustain. To be sure, underlying the need to collect and organize the knowledge that elucidates classical and patristic texts is the notion that their meaning is hidden until revealed by painstaking study, but few of the contributions to this book directly engage with this theme and some of them ignore it completely. Fortunately, this in no way dimin-

1 S. O’Sullivan: *Early Medieval Glosses on Prudentius’ Psychomachia*. The Weitz Tradition. Leiden/Boston 2004 (Mittellateinische Studien und Texte 31); and ead. (ed.): *Glossae aevi Carolini in libros I–II Martiani Capellae De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*. Turnhout 2010 (Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis 237).

2 See, for example, ead.: *Text, Gloss, and Tradition in the Early Medieval West: Expanding into a World of Learning*. In: G. Dinkova-Bruun/T. Major (eds.): *Teaching and Learning in Medieval Europe. Essays in Honour of Gernot R. Wieland*. Turnhout 2017 (Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin 11), pp. 3–24. Foundational to this field of inquiry is G. R. Wieland: *The Latin Glosses on Arator and Prudentius in Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.5.35*. Toronto 1983 (Studies and Texts 61).

ishes the value of this collection, the contents of which are uniformly informative and thought-provoking.

Anna A. Grotan's article ("Understanding the Scope of Knowledge in Early Medieval St Gall," pp. 39–89) considers how early medieval monks grappled with organizing ancient schemes of knowledge inherited from Stoic and Aristotelian traditions mediated through the writings of Augustine, Isidore, Cassiodorus, Alcuin, and Hrabanus Maurus. Through a comprehensive analysis of manuscripts from St. Gall, she demonstrates how Carolingian monks used marginal commentaries and diagrams (paratextual materials not always listed in manuscript catalogues) to make sense of these models. Her inquiry reveals that the Stoic tradition (a three-part division of knowledge into physics, ethics, and logic incorrectly ascribed to Plato) was in vogue at St. Gall in the ninth century, but eventually gave way in the tenth century to the Aristotelian classification (a two-part division of knowledge into speculative and practical branches) owing to the growing popularity of Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophie*, which espoused the latter model. Cross-pollination between the two traditions was rampant, as was experimentation, as Carolingian theologians strived to find a place for theology and the seven liberal arts in taxonomies rooted in pagan antiquity. Dense with information from manuscript sources, this article shows that the library of St. Gall has still not given up all her secrets.

Mariken Teeuwen's contribution ("The Intertwining of Ancient and Late-Antique Authorities in the Margins of Carolingian Manuscripts," pp. 91–113) compliments Grotan's essay but she shifts the focus to the commentary tradition associated with a particular text: Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*. Carolingian commentators spent considerable effort elucidating the meaning of this fifth-century text about the seven liberal arts, parts of which were not self-evident to early medieval Christians. Despite its pagan origins and mythological trappings, *De nuptiis* remained a useful text to think with. From it, Christian readers argued that the liberal arts stood at the center of a process of learning that awoke innate knowledge in the human mind that had been occluded by original sin and ultimately, through hard work, brought the learner closer to God. They explicated their insights about the meaning of Martianus' text with reference to other authors and works (pagan and Christian alike), by examining and reconciling conflicting testimonies, and by employing diagrams and other visual schema to make their point. In doing so, they "indulged in a slow reading of the text,

doubling, perhaps even tripling it in size with their paratexts” (p. 110), a clear indication of the value that they placed in this learning process.

Michael W. Herren’s article (“Philology and Mercury after the Wedding: Truth and Fiction in Three Didactic Works,” pp. 115–153) picks up the thread of Teeuwen’s contribution to examine Martinanus’ *De nuptiis* in the context of two later works: the seventh-century *Epitomae* and *Epistolae* of Vergilius Maro Grammaticus and the eighth-century *Cosmographia Aethici Istri* falsely attributed to Jerome. He argues that these seemingly disparate texts have more in common than meets the eye in terms of genre, narrative structure, language, and purpose. All of them may be categorized as Menippean satire, but with didactic content. The authors each invented literary *personae* for themselves that spoke in the first person and used purposely obscure language that required the reader’s close attention to decipher. The results, contends Herren, were “textual puzzles” which the authors “expected their students to solve with the aid of coaching” (p. 146). Although they were separated by several centuries, these three works employed similar techniques to teach students how to distinguish fact from fiction.

David Ganz’s short piece (“Latin Shorthand and Latin Learning,” pp. 155–172) surveys the manuscript evidence for the use of Roman shorthand (so-called ‘Tironian notes’ after Cicero’s slave Tiro, who allegedly invented them) in early medieval Europe. He offers a catalogue of manuscripts that contain shorthand notes, a practice attested from the end of antiquity through to the Carolingian period, when scholars revised the practice and compiled a massive dictionary of note-forms.<sup>3</sup> Early medieval copyists employed these notes for a variety of purposes: to collate texts; to mark textual variants; and to signal passages to be excerpted and copied. Entire manuscripts of texts written in these notes, usually the Psalter, may have been used to train aspiring notaries. The practice died out in the eleventh century.

A contribution by Franck Cinato [“Critical Cumulation? How Glossaries were Constituted in the Early Middle Ages (6th–8th Centuries),” pp. 173–200] considers the following question: How did early medieval scholars compile their glossaries? Drawing his insights from three glossaries surviving in Carolingian manuscripts (*Abavus*, *Abba*, and *Ambrosia*, the latter also known as *Fragmenta monacensia*), he explains how the production of a new glossary

3      *Commentarii Notarum Tironianarum. Cum prolegomenis adnotationibus criticis et exegeticis notarumque indice alphabetico.* Ed. W. Schmitz. Leipzig 1893.

was almost always undertaken with the aim of improving an existing working tool. This occurred in two ways. First, scholars expanded existing glossaries with ‘one-off additions.’ Second, they recast two or more existing glossaries into a single, comprehensive text. This process of recasting could involve (a) ‘stacking’ together alphabetical sections (words and explanations) drawn from different glossaries; (b) assimilating explanations for individual words from the source glossary into a new one; and (c) completely reorganizing two or more glossaries to create a new, consistently alphabetized resource.

Patrizia Lendinara’s article (“Unveiling the Sources of the Glosses to the Third Book of the *Bella Parisiaca Urbis* by Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés,” pp. 201–228) is a case study that considers the third book of Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés’s late ninth-century poem about the Viking siege of Paris in 885–886. Unlike the first two books of the poem, the third book has a disproportionate number of rare and difficult words that the author himself glossed with reference materials at hand. Lendinara argues that Abbo’s two principal sources for these glosses were versions of the *Liber glossarum*, which provided the definitions for over 160 obscure Latin words in Book 3, and the *Scholica Graecarum glossarum*, which contributed over forty Greek loanwords. Moreover, she shows that several of Abbo’s glosses had parallels in the ‘glossa IV’ found in a tenth-century manuscript in Barcelona: Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó, MS Ripoll 74, fols. 37v–50r. These sources testify to the rich repository of textual tools that the poet had at his disposal in the late ninth century.

Rosalind C. Love moves the conversation to early medieval England, specifically the city of Canterbury around the year 1000, where she examines annotated copies of Boethius’ *Consolatio Philosophiae* (“‘But What Polybius the Greek Physician Says is More Correct’: Sources of Knowledge in the Glosses to Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* at Tenth-Century Canterbury,” pp. 229–254). Early medieval scribes packed the margins of Boethius’ seminal text with glosses, to the point where their “seemingly relentless accumulation” (p. 230) sometimes created “handsome bundles of contradiction” (p. 233). What point did this serve and what do these glosses reveal about the intellectual preoccupations of their compilers? Through an examination of examples from two tenth-century Boethius manuscripts, Love argues that glosses on ancient mythological allusions in the *Consolatio Philosophiae* were pragmatic rather than arbitrary. She found that

[t]he drive [of the glossators] to highlight and direct a moral lesson fastened on any viable story is very much in the spirit of allegorical exegesis of the Scriptures, which happily used any Biblical peg on which a teaching point could be hung, however far-fetched (p. 239).

Kees Dekker's article ("Collecting Encyclopaedic Knowledge in the *Vocabularius Sancti Galli*," pp. 255–313) returns the reader to St. Gall, where the contents of an eighth-century manuscript have presented a puzzle to modern interpreters. St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 913 comprises three distinct units. Units I and II begin with long texts (Jerome's *Epistula* 53 to Paulinus and the *Ioca monachorum*, respectively) followed by seemingly random bits of information, while Unit III preserves a glossary known as the *Vocabularius Sancti Galli*. Most scholars have dismissed this compilation as a disordered *omnium gatherum* compiled by an insular scribe on the Continent in the later eighth century. Focusing his analysis on Units I and II, Dekker strives successfully to show that the "smaller, encyclopaedic texts were written or excerpted with longer, major texts as the frame of reference", thus revealing an order underlying the seeming randomness of the manuscript's many short texts and thereby granting "rare insight into the world of ideas of this scribe and compiler, who was neither a great scholar, nor a saint, but a modest ecclesiastic exploring the world of biblical exegesis" (p. 290).

There follows a pair of case studies concerning Carolingian manuscripts for priests. The first by Evina Stein ("Early Medieval Catechetical Collections Containing Material from the *Etymologiae* and the Place of Isidore of Seville in Carolingian *Correctio*," pp. 315–356) begins with an examination of St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 879, a modest handbook made in the ninth century. This *florilegium* is made up entirely of excerpts from Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, including passages on weights and measures, laws, church offices, the ten names of God, characters from the Old and New Testament, and categories of Christians (martyrs, priests, monks, and lay believers). Stein argues that the compiler of this manuscript has recast these excerpts as a pedagogical resource for a Carolingian cleric. Taking this *florilegium* as her starting point, she examines several similar Isidorean collections from the ninth century to illuminate "a broader early medieval trend of excerption of 'useful' material from the *Etymologiae*" (p. 318). As I have argued similarly elsewhere regarding the repurposing of parts of the *Regula Benedicti* for pastoral use in the Carolingian period, Stein concludes that the "utilitarian character, brevity, and simplicity of language" of Isidore's work made it "the per-

fect resource to tap for the formation of clerics whose level of Latin may have been limited and previous knowledge of Christian doctrine dubious” (p. 345).<sup>4</sup>

The second case study by John J. Contreni (“*Hic continentur ista*: Collection and Concealing in an Early Ninth-Century Instruction-Reader,” pp. 357–407) considers Laon, Bibliothèque municipale “Suzanne Martinet,” MS 265, another ninth-century manuscript for the edification of priests. This book is unusual in several ways. First, it contains thirty-one different texts, but no baptismal tract, so it has not been included among the ‘instruction readers’ catalogued and studied by the late Susan A. Keefe.<sup>5</sup> Second, two of its texts have been effaced as a warning to readers, while a third has been torn out of the manuscript entirely. Contreni offers an in-depth examination of the book’s complex codicology and abundant contents. He concludes that it was “clearly no parish priest’s book but belonged to three generations of cathedral personnel” (p. 366), who may have used it to educate priests before they began their ministries. A later reader of Laon 265 took offense at the presence of the apocryphal *Evangelium Nicodemi* in this volume and wrote a warning to this effect for readers (fol. 2r). He went further with a short treatise entitled *De secreto glorioso incarnationis domini nostri Christi* (fol. 122v), which he found so distasteful that he erased it, scribbled it out, and marked it with obeluses, in addition to writing a condemnation of the text. Yet another offensive work, entitled *De elisabeth et zacharia* in the manuscript’s table of contents, was torn completely from the book, perhaps by the same reader.

Ildar Garipzanov’s article (“Graphic Ciphers and the Early Medieval Practices of *Collectio* and Concealment,” pp. 409–438) examines two kinds of graphic ciphers found in early medieval manuscripts before the year 1000: monograms and occult signs (*caracteres*). While monograms were common on coinage and luxury objects in Late Antiquity, they were frequently accompanied by legends that helped viewers to decipher their meaning. In contrast, scribes in the Carolingian period employed them to conceal their

4 S. G. Bruce: Textual Triage and Pastoral Care in the Carolingian Age: The Example of the *Rule of Benedict*. In: *Traditio* 75, 2020, pp. 127–141.

5 S. A. Keefe: *Water and the Word. Baptism and the Education of the Clergy in the Carolingian Empire*. 2 vols. Notre Dame, Ind. 2002 (Publications in Medieval Studies). On this topic, see most recently C. van Rhijn: *Leading the Way to Heaven. Pastoral Care and Salvation in the Carolingian Period*. London/New York 2022 (The Medieval World).

own names, which only their educated peers could decode. On a different cultural register, indecipherable signs of occult origin were common on amulets in the late Roman period, but condemned by church authorities, because they often served some apotropaic function. This did not prevent Carolingian monks and priests from copying them in collections of medical lore.

In his contribution (“Building a Splendid Library: The Background and Context of the *Bibliotheca magnifica*,” pp. 439–466), Andy Orchard offers a close reading of twelve Latin riddles (*aenigmata*) found together in the eleventh-century “Canterbury Songs” manuscript (Cambridge, University Library, Gg.5.35). The accompanying rubrics provide the answers to the riddles as the following set of feminine nouns: *sapientia*, *physica*, *arithmetica*, *geometrica*, *musica*, *astronomia*, *ethica*, *quattuor virtutes*, *logica*, *grammatica*, *rhetorica*, and *dialecta*. Orchard shows how these riddles comprise a unified collection, which together create “a kind of family tree or taxonomy of wisdom or philosophy itself” (p. 441). The interrelationship between these concepts derives from Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae*, thus picking up a theme raised by Stein’s article (see above).

The final substantive essay in the collection by Michael James Clarke (“Medieval Scholarship and Intertextuality: A Case Study of Saxo Grammaticus on the Giants,” pp. 467–492) strays beyond the chronological boundary of the book’s title. As he composed the *Gesta Danorum* in the early thirteenth century, Saxo drew on two streams of tradition when he portrayed giants in his narrative: stories from vernacular Scandinavian traditions and biblical exegesis filtered through late ancient authorities writing in Latin like Boethius and Martianus Capella. This study is illustrative of the tenacity of the early medieval literary traditions examined by other contributors to the book. Ciaran Arthur closes the volume with a short epilogue that offers a summary of some of its principal themes (“Harvesting Wisdom from Books and the Beauty of the Unknown,” pp. 493–503).

As a whole, this collection offers many useful studies that illuminate the ways in which early medieval authors made sense of ancient and patristic knowledge in a manuscript format. Particularly important are the contributions that remind us of the value of paratextual materials, like glosses and diagrams, which are not always mentioned in catalogue descriptions and remain difficult to represent in printed editions. Scholars of early medieval education, manuscript culture, and classical reception will find many worth-

while articles in this volume, which is a welcome addition to the *Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin* series.

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Scott G. Bruce: Rezension zu: Sinéad O’Sullivan/Ciaran Arthur (eds.): *Crafting Knowledge in the Early Medieval Book. Practices of Collecting and Concealing in the Latin West*. Turnhout: Brepols 2023 (Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin 16). In: *Plekos* 26, 2024, S. 425–432 (URL: [https://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2024/r-osullivan\\_arthur.pdf](https://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2024/r-osullivan_arthur.pdf)).

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