

Guglielmo Cavallo, ed., *Libri e lettori nel medioevo: guida storica e critica*, Roma: Laterza, 2003, Pp. xxxiii, 325, Paperback, €20.00.

Edited by Guglielmo Cavallo, this volume is one of a number published by Laterza and dedicated to the book history of various periods. These include *Libri, editori e pubblico nel mondo antico* (1975) and *Libri e lettori nel mondo bizantino* (1982). Organized by historical period rather than geography, these volumes retain a European, rather than principally Italian, perspective, in terms of both content and the nationality of their contributors. This guide to books and readers of the medieval period covers the sixth to the fifteenth century, including discussions of the production, transmission and reception of texts in North Africa, Spain, France, Britain, the Low Countries and Germany, as well as in Italy. Of the six essays included, two are translated from German and one from French. The bibliography includes publications in Italian, English, French, German, Spanish and Dutch.

As the fifth edition of a text originally published in 1977, this book will already be familiar to many readers. In 1977, it brought together for the first time five essays that had been published between 1957 and 1973, as either journal articles or book chapters. Bernhard Bischoff's essay is an amalgamation of two pieces previously published separately and the essay by Cavallo is the only one that appears to have been written specifically for the volume. The fifth edition is unaltered except for a select bibliography of publications from the last twenty years, which has been included in addition to the original bibliography. However, the quality of the contributions from some of the major figures in the history of book production means that it remains important reading for anyone with an interest in the production, transmission and reception of texts in medieval Europe.

The essays are arranged in chronological order, beginning with Armando Petrucci's discussion of Christian books between the sixth and seventh centuries. Petrucci describes a shift in attitude away from seeing books as mere instruments designed to transmit a text towards viewing and exploiting the form of the book itself as a symbol and a reflection of an ideology. In effect, the same attitude informs the premise for this collection of essays: an understanding of the material form as a mirror of culture and society.

This is confirmed in the second essay when Bischoff asserts that "i manoscritti sono qui per noi in primo luogo monumenti di vita culturale" (48). The emphasis in this essay is less on an ideology however, and more on the mechanics of production and diffusion. Bischoff offers an impressive survey of the locations where manuscripts were copied between the sixth and ninth centuries, including who was involved in copying manuscripts and what types of texts were copied. He discusses distinct areas but also the cross-fertilization of different cultures, using as evidence texts such as Cassiodorus' *Institutiones*, the study of scripts, and marginalia and dedicatory letters that witness texts no longer in existence. As well as compiling information about the production and diffusion of texts, Bischoff evaluates the scripts of previously unknown manuscripts and names some scriptoria and groups of copyists for the first time.

Giorgio Cencetti's essay is centred on Benedictine influence on the history of Latin script. In contrast with other palaeographers, Cencetti claims that the existence of various

types of pre-Caroline script did not successively lead to the birth of Caroline minuscule, they are simply chronologically anterior to it, and that the scribes of these pre-Caroline scripts did not set out to propose a script which could unify the fragmentation of writing styles that had occurred since the 'barbarian' invasions. Cencetti also argues that uniformity was not an important guiding principle in most scriptoria. *Beneventana*, which probably derived from a pre-Caroline script, may have been the most characteristic script of the Benedictine scribes, but it was not the only one. In the second part of his essay, Cencetti suggests how the Benedictines of Cluny were involved in the diffusion of Caroline minuscule outside the Holy Roman Empire. He describes how it spread via monasteries founded in eleventh-century Spain by the Cluniacs, who brought with them manuscripts written in Caroline minuscule, and were then on hand to supply exemplars, naturally written in Caroline minuscule, when the Roman Rite was restored under liturgical reforms.

Guglielmo Cavallo analyses southern Italian book production between the eighth and eleventh centuries. He illustrates how Montecassino was instrumental in preserving a large part of classical literature for future generations, but also how its close connections with Lombard culture meant that when 'minor Lombardy' gave way to Norman influence, the privileged role that Montecassino had played in the diffusion of texts disappeared. Cavallo also highlights the influence of Greek culture on southern Italy by focusing on the illustrated liturgical rolls used to communicate religious doctrine and political propaganda to the illiterate.

In the fifth essay, Guy Fink-Errera sets out to analyse the production of university texts according to what is commonly known as the 'pecia' system. This was a system designed to provide students with identical texts from which to study, using unbound manuscript quires authorized by the university, which were hired out for copying. Fink-Errera defines an exemplar in this context and explains the role of the *petiarii* engaged to oversee the exemplars, although he points out that one of the unresolved problems is determining how effective the *petiarii* actually were. He emphasizes the importance of economics throughout and several of his hypotheses regarding the functioning of the system are founded on the assumption that stationers were ultimately businessmen and would be driven by profit. In the course of this exposition, Fink-Errera engages with one of the few earlier articles on the same subject by Jean Destrez. Whereas Destrez had been interested in the *pecia* system from a philological perspective — a manuscript prepared in this manner for copying must be an example of an authoritative text and therefore particularly important for textual criticism — Fink-Errera, however, is concerned with the phenomenon for its own sake as a valuable reflection of medieval culture and history in a wider sense.

The volume concludes with an essay by Hans Lülfiing that considers books and readers operating in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Adopting a socio-economic perspective, Lülfiing charts the rise of the middle classes and the secularization of the book, both in terms of its contents and production methods. The large increase in the number of books produced, which monastic scriptoria could no longer satisfy, led to a rise in the number of stationers and the transfer of the book trade to an urban environment. Broad developments in the history of the book in the Latin West are traced, as well as specific features, such as books of hours in France, book illustration in the Low Countries and the foundation of libraries in Italy.

Each essay includes extensive endnotes with plenty of suggestions for further reading. This is supplemented by a short bibliography divided into themes linked to the essays, as

well as twenty-four black-and-white plates providing illustrative examples of points made in the essays and editor's introduction.

Literary historians concerned with constructing textual traditions will find much of interest in this volume, which also provides a socio-historical context to medieval literary studies. For historians of medieval universities, the essay by Fink-Errera remains one the most authoritative treatments of the *pecia* system. Although there is comparatively little attention devoted to the fourteenth century, scholars of Boccaccio interested in his reception will gain a broad insight into developments in the book industry, which might help to shed some light on issues such as Boccaccio's decision to make copies of his own works. Essentially, however, this is a collection of essays that is especially useful to those interested in the history of script. Throughout the volume, various claims are made for the importance of materiality, but the focus is largely restricted to an analysis of scripts rather than any extended consideration of other material features such as support or binding. The complementary nature of the first four essays, focused as they are on palaeographical concerns relating to the Early Middle Ages has ensured that this volume continues to hold a prominent place on the palaeography syllabuses in many Italian universities. By the editor's own admission, the obvious lacuna in this historical guide is any treatment of humanistic books. Neither is there any significant discussion of the introduction of print in the fifteenth century, although Lülfiing's essay fills in some historical and sociological background against which the impact of print can be assessed.

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