

these books. The splendid Maiestas image which opens the manuscript, one of the high points of Salian painting and, as Beuckers points out, a precocious example of a continuous gold ground, presents a fusion of elements from the previous 'painterly' group of Cologne manuscripts and the more hieratic style associated with the Reichenau. The Canon Tables manifest a form typical of Gospel books from Cologne, combining arcades dividing the columns with an overlying pediment. The addition of frames lends these magnificent pages an unprecedented monumentality. The greatest glory of these pages, however, is their mesmerizing coloration, combined with flecks of gold, which lends them an overweening sumptuousness, a simulated materiality that, given their splendid reproduction in this volume, ought to have received more attention. Subsequent sections deal, respectively, with the author portrait of St Jerome, the Evangelist portraits, and the initial pages that, in German manuscripts of this period, often assume an importance, in keeping with the Gospels' glorification of the Word, no less than that of figural decoration. UV-photography permits Beuckers to identify a previously overlooked preparatory drawing for an unfinished and ultimately unused image of Matthew. Given Beucker's expertise as an architectural historian, it is not surprising that he dedicates a subtle analysis to the unusually prominent architectural elements in the Evangelist portraits. The volume, which is accompanied by a set of two facsimiled bifolia from the opening of the Gospel of John, closes with a presentation of the codicological and technical examination of the manuscript carried out by Doris Oltrogge. Comparing the facsimiled folia with the colour plates of the same pages in the monograph, it must be said that the latter better convey the play of light across the undulating gold-covered surfaces of the parchment, an effect which brings the Word to life.

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Jeremy Mynott, *Birds in the Ancient World: Winged Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). xxi + 451 pp. + 84 plates. ISBN 978-0198713654. £30.00.

It goes without saying that no medievalist can ignore the influence of classical writing in medieval scholarly and literary traditions. There can be few subjects addressed by medieval writers for which there was not some classical precedent consulted, translated, or adapted to some degree, and this is certainly no exception when it comes to the medieval natural world. Antique legacies shaped a great deal of 'natural history' discourses in succeeding centuries: Plato, subsumed into early patristic theology; Aristotle, encountered through Pliny's *Naturalis historia* – a huge influence in itself – and then through direct translations in later centuries. Texts like Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, and later the bestiaries, were

deeply indebted to classical learning *de natura rerum* 'on the nature of things'.

Jeremy Mynott's *Birds in the Ancient World*, then, offers rich material for scholars engaged with medieval non-human and environmental interests, an area of study that has gained much traction in recent years. At its simplest, the book provides a highly impressive catalogue of sources on avian appearances in classical literature. This achievement is a boon in itself to those specifically interested in birds in medieval texts (worthy of 'special menciou' among all animals, as Bartholomaeus Anglicus states). Readers can trace sources in one single volume, reassured by fresh and authoritative translations that will contribute very admirably to scholarly footnotes. Mynott is eminently qualified on his subject: he knows his birds and has an extensive background in the classics (his translation of Thucydides' *War of the Peloponnesians* was published in 2013 with Cambridge University Press).

But the book is much more than an anthology, and will certainly appeal to those with more general requirements, too. Mynott's narrative elegantly coheres the astonishing array of materials into parts and chapters that explore how birds mattered in the wider natural and cultural environments of Greek and Roman lives: as food or medicine, entertainment, markers of seasons, as omens, metaphors, and messengers. Significantly, many of these contexts are directly or closely relevant to medieval theorizing on the natural world, in which age, too, we might say humans and non-humans 'were understood to be in the same sphere of activity', and that 'With this intimacy went an interdependency' (p. 5). Readers working on medieval concepts of voice, for instance, encountering birdsong in grammar theories, would do well to consult Mynott (pp. 57–60; 142–9) for sources and lines of transmission. Or what of the phoenix in classical experiences and learning (pp. 195–7); Aristotle's monumental influence (pp. 222–41); or antique responses to metamorphosis (pp. 276–84), which became such an enduring concept in late medieval literature?

*Birds in the Ancient World* is a welcome and important resource for the scholar working on any aspect of birds in all spheres of medieval life – in bestiaries, fables, romances, dream-visions, and debates, in falconry, heraldry, hunting, and writing, in species- and place-names. Mynott's erudite discussions, though, will make an excellent companion for those wishing to explore the classical legacy in medieval 'nature' paradigms.

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