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Introduction

1 Opening words

Books have long been used in a wide variety of performances in many cultures, ranging from religious rituals to scholarly practices and from courtly etiquette to theatre performances. They contain and preserve instructions about the performances, covering utterances, movements and actions. They are interacted with by human actors as part of the performance, and sometimes they themselves are the centre of performances. Books of this kind were handwritten for centuries – indeed, for millennia in some cultures. Even in the era of the printed book and our current digital era, handwritten or hand-annotated books still continue to play an important role in many kinds of performances, allowing individualised solutions to be found for keeping records and transmitting information.

This volume presents a collection of papers by experts from a wide variety of disciplines, each with their own methods and approaches. Together, they offer a panorama of perspectives on how manuscripts can be studied as objects and actors in various kinds of performances. Situated at the juncture between manuscript studies and performance studies, they analyse the various roles that manuscripts play in a broad range of performances in different religions, arts and sciences. They consider situations where humans, manuscripts and other kinds of natural or supernatural entities interact. While some of the contributions focusing on contemporary manuscripts rely on the authors' direct observations, all of the papers analyse the performances in which manuscripts are involved from the material, textual and visual evidence provided by the manuscripts themselves.

The manuscripts studied here are shaped by the performances in which they participate, while also shaping the performances in which they are involved. Developing tools on a case-study basis in order to unravel, explore and study the complex relationships between manuscripts and performances is the central purpose of this volume. In order to enter this largely uncharted territory, rather than prescribing a rigid theoretical and methodological framework to follow, we invited the authors to use their own expertise and methodological toolkits to propose a suitable approach to the specific challenges posed by the manuscripts and their religious, artistic or scientific domains. Thus, each chap-

ter contributes in its own way to enriching the notion of performance and to deepening the way in which a manuscript can be studied from its own particular understanding of performance. In addition to the specific new research results outlined in each article, it is this diversity of concrete methodological propositions presented by authors from a wide range of scholarly disciplines that is the strength of this collective volume.

To start off, it may be useful to provide a rough sketch of how ‘performance’ is generally conceived of in the various papers that weave manuscript and performance studies together. We take it that in a performance, the performers engage in a planned and intentional series of actions that are meant to have a particular effect on the audience. This description contains three key expressions that we shall simply touch on initially. First, our understanding of performers is very broad and includes individuals, groups and objects. Groups can either act in synchrony, such as when a group of singers perform a song together on stage, or in diachrony when the ‘same’ musical piece is performed in a community, for instance – perhaps in a ritual context – over the course of generations or when a standard astronomical observation programme is conducted for centuries and stored in a dedicated archive by the astronomers. Objects of many kinds can play a crucial role in performances, so much so that they themselves can be regarded as performers. They may be ‘natural’ sites, buildings, altars, different kinds of instruments or, of course, manuscripts. Second, these different networks of performers engage in a series of actions that is often regarded as the performance itself. By using the word ‘planned’ here, we are attempting to express the essential fact that the series of actions must be perceived as being deliberate by the performers (and generally the audience as well), and not just as something random. Moreover, the planning of performances also involves temporality and spatialisation. Finally, audiences are also understood in a highly inclusive way: they include both the performers and any witnesses of the phenomena produced during the performance who are able and willing to give a meaning to these phenomena.

A performance is a communicative act, regardless of whether it is planned or spontaneous, conducted orally or done in writing. Generally, this kind of communication is conceived of as existing *in performance* only, that is, deployed instantaneously during the performance. However, the temporality of a performance covers a larger array of implications and possibilities. When broadly considering a performance as an action, it includes a certain degree of preparation, practice and iterations preceding its concrete realisation. Similarly, once the action itself is accomplished, its recording and transmission may also be considered an integral part of the performance. These periods of time preceding

or following a performance must be included in the investigation as well since they are intrinsically linked to the elaboration and diffusion of the performance. Consequently, we regard the different stages of the construction and rendition of a performance as an integral part of the performative process.

In addition, this volume of SMC seeks to highlight the different processes at the heart of the performance leading to the creation of performative rules or customs, and to explore the resulting appropriation and adaptation of the performance in various cultural and social settings. In this context, there is no tension between the singular and collective endeavours taking part in the act of performance, but a complementarity over time. The *medium* or the channel of the textualisation and transmission of the performance – the manuscript – may also be seen as a vehicle of memorisation. In some cases, the techniques and principles of memorisation may become a performance per se, as in the example of the medieval *ars memoriae* ('art of memory').

The contributions to the volume follow different approaches, ranging from codicological, philological and art-history methodologies to more ethnographical ones based on direct observations. In most cases, they are attempts to use various means to re-enact or reconstruct the performance in which manuscripts are involved as a way to inspect and study the relationship between manuscripts and their performance. This sheds a particular light on the material, visual and intellectual aspects of manuscripts and reconfigures the view on these aspects and their mutual relations. Consequently, the papers reveal the ways in which manuscripts were produced and used, and how they functioned in the environment in which they circulated.

The 'performing' look at manuscript studies adopted in this book opens up a perspective where the relation between manuscripts, the practices that shape them, and related networks of individuals, groups and objects is the central focus. The issues of temporality and spatialisation also come to the fore in analysing the manuscripts themselves and the performances in which they play a role. For instance, the timing and spatial arrangement of a performance can be found in a manuscript. Some books contain information about when the performance takes place, how long certain actions last or where the performers, audience and objects should be and at what distance from each other. At the same time, details about time and space that are not recorded in manuscripts or known to us can be reconstructed by participating in or observing the performances.

Conversely, the collection of case studies presented here also reflects views that will no doubt enrich performance studies. First, it does so in a temporal dimension by revealing ways and methods that allow performances to be recon-

structured from various kinds of clues and traces found in manuscripts. We hope that our book will be used as a kind of repository of propositions for different approaches that allow the history of different types of performance practices to be explored in systematic ways. Second, the scope of what is usually considered in performance studies has been broadened here to include various textual and artistic practices as well as scientific and religious endeavours. In some ways, this broadening of such a wide range of socially embedded creative practices under the umbrella term of ‘performance’ produces a manuscript-sources-based platform suitable for further anthropological and philosophical research on the significance of these practices for various local cultures.

In light of this, we have chosen to organise the contents of the book according to three different ways in which manuscripts function in relation to a particular form of performance. The papers in the first section, ‘Manuscripts for performance’, discuss manuscripts that are used backstage for preparing and giving instructions for performances. The second section, ‘Manuscripts in performance’, presents manuscripts that are taken on stage, as it were, contributing to the enactment of performances. Finally, the last section, ‘Manuscripts as performers’, is on manuscripts that are performers in their own right, producing a desired effect on the audience.

2 Manuscripts for performance

A manuscript may be defined as one of the channels of communication that allow a user to prepare a performance or record it once it is finished. In this sense, the medium is the textualisation of the future or past performance. If the performance covers various cultural practices, it also implies a large number of different textual and writing practices. Taking this idea a step further, authors, scribes or readers can be considered performers of a book or a page.¹ The manuscript per se is difficult to assess as an instrument of performance; it is only when it is linked with the action of performance that it can be defined as such. It is certainly clearer when a manuscript was used to prepare a forthcoming performance – it could be a set of instructions or stipulated actions for the purpose of the performance. This is particularly striking in the case of medical recipes or religious rituals.² Other disciplines may also be involved, of course, as in arith-

1 Maxwell, Simpson and Davies 2013.

2 Skemer 2006; Jones and Olsan 2015.

metrical or astronomical canons, which rehearse instructions to accomplish a performative action. These instructions are written either as simple memoranda listing the different stages of the performance or as canonical rules to be followed to the letter. The *mise à l'écrit* of some words is also justified by their illocutionary force.³ The power conveyed by the writing and oral pronunciation of the utterance or word should not be underestimated. The written expression of the preparation of the performance also covers a large spectrum of practices, from musical notation, indications when to read a text, *écrits opportunistes* ('opportunistic writings'), informal writing and marginalia to formalised, commissioned texts.⁴ The narrative structure can also vary in accordance with innovations introduced by the scribes, which reflect changes in the performance practices, or those required by an institution or the manuscript's commissioner. However, the structure also varies in relation to the different practices found in the geographical area in question, the identity of the owner and the reader, and various other factors.

These writings are therefore rarely fixed. On the contrary, they are subject to the hazards experienced by their containers. A manuscript was often passed from hand to hand, texts were amended and notes were made near them. If a text was written in anticipation of its performance, its textualisation also guaranteed its survival after the performance and made it available for changes or a different audience. Instead of fixity, the textualisation of the performance-to-be enabled its adaptability in future. This adaptability implies different practices and modes of circulation: the text may have been circulated as part of a textual tradition – with all that that implied regarding variations and changes – or it served as the basis for a new performance. In any event, texts and manuscripts of this kind were produced for the purpose of being performed in the first instance. A manuscript can also preserve texts that testify to past performances. This sometimes happened when an existing text was amended after a performance to improve the set of instructions for the next performance. The practice is particularly common in scientific observations and experiments as part of the performative action, permitting one to enhance and enrich a set of instructions. As a matter of fact, despite their repetitive dimension, most of these rules, instructions and memoranda were regarded as temporary and adaptable by contemporary users.

The entanglement between the individual and collective traditions of the texts and manuscripts is also worth underlining. An individual can make a writ-

³ Austin 1975. The term is also used in Jones and Olsan 2015, 409.

⁴ Tura 2005.

ten record of a performance in order to use it as an aide-mémoire for the different stages and sequences of actions and utterances in the performance. This record may then become an exemplar used by different groups as a result of its transmission. Furthermore, in Christianity, for instance, manuscripts with recordings or instructions about rituals were made to be diffused for communal use, either at a specific time or over several generations. This temporal dimension seems twofold: it includes a practical aspect – the fact of memorising the instructions to be performed – and an ontological aspect drawing upon the idea of transmitting information to future generations. The latter is linked to the inextricable relationship between a book and *memoria* ('memory'), a trope used by many authors and scholars over the years. Through the writing process, knowledge about performances is transmitted for the future and may even become a collective cultural asset at one point. The adaptivity of the instructions or rules relating to a performance also leads to successive written additions being made, resulting in several layers of practices and *memoria* accumulating over time. It is not unusual to find a series of predictions written in a manuscript at different times.⁵

As the memorial channel of a performance, a manuscript is certainly more striking when the performative act is shaped by a community or is the result of a collective practice. Unlike a single memory transmitted to a group, this is a collective practice or performance established as a rule and then appropriated by one or more individuals. The Latin term *canon* clearly states this kind of transmission; it refers to a custom, a rule or a set of instructions continuously adapted to different needs, uses or societies. The performance originating from an original collective endeavour laid the foundations for single or collective reworkings and appropriation in the future. No matter whether they are liturgical, astronomical, arithmetical, religious or scientific canons, they clearly reflect this process of creation and perpetual adaptation to different realities and different times.

Manuscripts are considered to be a medium of performance by Alexander Weinstock and Martin Jörg Schäfer in their paper dedicated to German prompt books of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These books detail theatrical performances and were intended to standardise and diffuse them. Although prompt books were produced to set a performance on paper, they were constantly adapted to the context of a specific theatre. Each prompt book is therefore unique, displays a great variety of practices and mentions different people. These manuscripts are significant evidence of the different aspects of a

5 Chardonnens 2007.

performance and its adaptability to different periods and contexts. A manuscript of this kind which is produced communally prepares and shapes the collective performance.

Two different aspects of the temporality of a performance are highlighted by Mathieu Ossendrijver in his article on Babylonian and Assyrian sources produced during the first millennium BCE. Babylonian sources have preserved information about the preparation and recording of the performance and sometimes include predictions and observations. The performance per se is not explained in astronomical diaries produced by Babylonian astronomers, contrary to Assyrian letters and reports revealing a great deal of information about performative rituals, observations and interpretation of the performance. The two types of sources are compared in terms of their underlying similarities, but the author also points out their differences in terms of how the performance was prepared and recorded and in terms of their performative processes.

The close link that exists between liturgy and private devotion is analysed by Eva Ferro. Her examination of the contents, format and visual organisation of a late-fifteenth-century breviary from the Abbey of San Zeno in Verona, Italy (Kremsmünster, Stiftsbibliothek, CC60) leads her to the conclusion that although the manuscript contains texts that were needed for the collective celebration of the liturgy, it was probably made for the abbot's personal use rather than for the monastic community's collective ritual practices. Thus, this manuscript reflects the simultaneous existence of a collective and individual performance.

Focusing on multiplication procedures in mathematical commentaries in Sanskrit, Agathe Keller explores the way in which a common mathematical operation was performed and then recorded to transmit and standardise a practice. Lists of solutions to mathematical problems contained in the commentaries she studies reveal a wealth of information about the material surface on which the operations or mathematical diagrams were originally performed or drawn. This article also testifies to the constant adaptability of the performance and its execution. The text was not fixed, but remained open to changes in terms of procedures. The generic aspect of the commentaries opens the way to many individual interpretations.

The appropriation of different sources originating from or shaping a performance and the production of new instructions and rules to perform are explored by Laure Miolo in her article about astronomer Lewis Caerleon's notebook. The temporality of the notebook, which was produced in the fifteenth century, is investigated here. The little book reveals an astronomical agenda devoted to eclipse computations. The different stages of Lewis Caerleon's learning of computational procedures highlight his scientific training based on the

different sources he assembled and adopted. He pursued and adapted these works to suit his personal agenda, creating his own way of computing eclipses. His observations are also recorded, but more as a means to legitimate computational practices than for the observational performance per se.

3 Manuscripts in performance

While manuscripts can play an essential role in preparing a performance, they are often essential to the performances themselves as well, regardless of whether these are religious rituals, musical or theatrical performances, scholarly research or teaching. Direct, multi-sensory interaction with the manuscripts is an essential part of performing with them: manuscripts are touched and handled, they are looked at, read and their contents are often vocalised (read out loud, chanted or sung). The ways in which manuscripts are part of the performance vary, as does the way in which they are embedded in their specific spatial and temporal settings. Perhaps the most obvious of these is that books are read from in many oral performances, whether during the Christian liturgy, a Buddhist monk's sermon, a musical performance or individual prayer.

While the performer(s) will sometimes only rely on manuscripts as a back-up aide-mémoire, some ritual performances such as the celebration of the Eucharist require the performer – in this case the priest-celebrant – to read every single word from the book, however familiar the wording may already be to that person. In addition to the words to be read and/or spoken by the performer, many other instructions about individual elements or the overall structure of the performance are present in manuscripts, too. These include musical notation, recitation marks and vocalisation aids instructing the performer about what words to use and how to pronounce, chant or sing them. Manuscripts made for complex performances that consist of a series of different readings and other actions may provide a structure for them by the manner in which their contents or paratextual elements are ordered. It is important to note, however, that the reading of linear texts is not the only way in which manuscripts can be used as tools for performance. Engaging with multi-graphic configurations such as tables and diagrams, maps and choreographic notation, for instance, calls for very different performative approaches.

While performances are shaped by manuscripts, manuscripts are also shaped by the performances for which they are used: from the choice and order of their contents to their visual organisation and material form. The second part of this volume contains five contributions that analyse the processes in which

performances and manuscripts shape each other. They all have a strong focus on the material and visual evidence of manuscripts, while also considering how these objects were embedded in the performance spatially and temporally.

Karen Desmond focuses on manuscripts used by singers in thirteenth-century England that are quite unlike the codices in which most medieval music has been transmitted to us: not the codex, but rather the scroll met these performers' requirements, and experimental approaches to the visual organisation and later additions and modifications testify to the performers' ongoing creative and pragmatic engagement with these manuscripts.

Matthieu Husson and Samuel Gessner's article investigates the ways in which a manuscript could be used for astronomical computation. The authors conclude that the physical handling of the manuscript, in particular the intense engagement with the tables and diagrams that are part of this highly sophisticated scholarly tool, shaped the user's understanding of the astrological phenomena investigated, highlighting both the potential and the limitations of such an approach.

Three articles are dedicated to the roles of manuscripts in religious performances. Jochen H. Vennebusch looks for evidence of how the staggering number of gospel books and gospel lectionaries that are known to have been part of the treasury of Bamberg Cathedral at the time of its foundation may have been 'orchestrated' throughout the year and within the topography of the cathedral. Lacking contemporary descriptions or instructions regarding this, the author focuses on passages in the manuscripts that are highlighted in various ways, both those that are part of the original commission and those that were added later to books that were initially produced for other churches.

Karin Becker's detailed analysis of the visual organisation of medieval psalter manuscripts in relation to their use for celebrating the Divine Office reveals the difficult relationship between the demands of a complex series of liturgical performances and the wish to preserve the Psalms in their entirety and in the original biblical order. The result of this is intricately structured and visually sophisticated manuscripts whose correct use, however, requires extensive knowledge of the structure and elements of the Divine Office, which is not explained in the manuscripts themselves. Frequent additions indicate that later users tried to include more instructions and structuring aids in the manuscripts.

Silpsupa Jaengsawang's contribution to the volume focuses on more recent manuscripts used in Buddhist funerary rituals in Laos and Thailand. In a ritual of this kind, a monk gives a sermon to an audience by relying on specific manuscripts. The article analyses the production of such manuscripts, their dedication to a particular monastery and their circulation in order to reveal their role

in the ritual performance. Part of an ongoing tradition, these manuscripts combine conservative characteristics like the oblong shape of the ‘pothi’ (palm-leaf manuscript), regardless of the actual material the manuscript is made of, with adaptations to the changing habits and skills of the producers and monks who perform with them.

4 Manuscripts as performers

Manuscripts can be essential for performance ‘behind’ or ‘on’ the stage, as the two previous sections show. In some instances, they can be regarded as performers in themselves. This corresponds to situations where the reading, handling, display or even production of manuscripts during a performance makes them the direct protagonists of the performance and not simply a medium to be used for or during the performance. In these contexts, the different layers of the complex relations between the actions of the performances and the textual, pictorial and material characteristics of the manuscripts interact more sharply. The temporality embedded in the manuscripts, their multi-sensorial physical presence and the effect that this presence has on the audience, the ways manuscripts organise the knowledge they transmit diachronically and synchronically, and the role of the individuals involved in their production, circulation and use are all aspects that are connected in various ways and that make the manuscripts powerful representatives of their contents and the knowledge that their commissioners possessed.

The articles in the third and last part of the volume reveal the interplay that exists between content, materiality, use and function in manuscripts by considering them as the main actors in a ‘network’ of performances. As such, manuscripts may ‘perform authorisation’: they have an authorising role to play by testifying and sanctioning the sacrality of the texts and images they transmit and legitimising their circulation. Besides authorisation, manuscripts may ‘perform authority’ as well: they have an authoritative role of witnessing royal political power or, when displayed (in a church, for example), ensuring the correctness of the performances as a kind of ‘judge’. Manuscripts may also ‘perform stability’: they ensure the stability or ‘purity’ of traditions over the centuries and preserve them from change, sometimes because of the fear that texts and material components may lose their efficacy once innovated. In the end, manuscripts may also ‘perform an embodiment’ of the holy figures described in their texts and images: the books act as material instantiations of saints, for instance, and

convey the supernatural power of these exalted figures by touching or rubbing the body of people who are ill or needy.

Apart from the often spectacular ways in which manuscripts can have profound effects on audiences, many of which are defining experiences, there is a striking commonality in the various cases found in this final section: manuscripts can become performers themselves when actors consciously establish a relation between manuscripts and performances. Sometimes, this is only apparent indirectly through various clues in the manuscripts, while in other cases it is more obvious, for instance when the object of the performance is the production of a manuscript or its use in healing and protective rituals. There are even situations where this performativity of manuscripts is so deeply embedded in a cultural setting that practical and speculative bodies of knowledge and beliefs are developed in order to account for it and ensure a socially beneficial and controlled exercise of this power.

Laura Fernández Fernández analyses a corpus of scientific manuscripts commissioned by the Castilian king, Alfonso X, nicknamed ‘the Wise’ (1221–1284), which were produced in his royal scriptorium. For the king, this undertaking – commissioning manuscripts reflecting different forms of the arts and multifaceted domains of knowledge – was an essential part of his cultural project and his political ideals. These manuscripts were primarily diplomatic and political tools designed to induce specific effects in his contemporaries and less a way of fostering the arts and sciences, however. Whatever their purpose was, they shaped the king’s persona in historiography.

Antonella Brita’s article is concerned with a large body of hagiographic manuscripts produced in Ethiopia from the fourteenth century onwards. The textual and codicological features of these multiple-texts manuscripts evolved over the course of time, which helps in understanding profound evolutions in the religious life of the communities where these manuscripts were produced, used and circulated. In particular, this shows how local saints were increasingly incorporated into the devotional practices of the country, which had previously only related to foreign saints. The inclusion of texts on local saints in the manuscripts legitimised them as holy figures worthy of worship, reciprocally transforming even the materiality of the manuscripts. Thus, the manuscripts performed veneration practices and contributed to shaping the local religious identity. The author also analyses how some of the holiness virtues of saints are partly present in (the texts and images of) a manuscript and can be transmitted to the participant in devotional and healing rituals. By reading words from a manuscript out loud, for instance, the officiant’s breath is embedded with spe-

cific virtues which can be transmitted to water simply by blowing on it. This water is then used for healing and protective purposes.

In her paper, Heidi Buck-Albulet considers a situation where the production of a manuscript is one of the central elements of a performance, namely collective poetry-writing in Japan. The tradition of producing *renga* manuscripts collectively began there several centuries ago and has been kept up to this day. Like Antonella Brita, Heidi Buck-Albulet was able to rely on her own direct observation of such performances. Comparing the manuscripts produced in different contemporary contexts to those from the pre-modern period, she studies the mutual relations between the manuscripts, the poems they contain and the collective procedures followed to produce the poem and manuscript. Finally, relying on an analysis of the terminology employed by the participants to describe these performances, she demonstrates that they possess elaborate knowledge of the relationship between the manuscripts and their performance, which is then compared to our own analytical categories as historians.

In her survey of Latin liturgical manuscripts, Laura Albiero analyses their relationship to performance in three different respects, which broadly correspond to the three parts of this book. Echoing the articles by Heidi Buck-Albulet and Antonella Brita in some ways, albeit in a very different setting, she points out how the making of liturgical manuscripts can be understood as a performance in itself. Given the religious and ritual nature of the performances with which these manuscripts are connected, the author highlights the foundational role of manuscript production and use within religious institutions, thus demonstrating that the cultural and social performativity of the manuscripts investigated goes beyond the actual ritual in which they are direct performers.

The religious and political performativity of manuscripts as described by historical actors themselves is the underlying thread in Felix Heinzer's contribution. The author makes use of the actor-network theory developed by Bruno Latour and others in presenting three case studies from the context of Western Latin Christian tradition. He highlights the agency of manuscripts in a network including human partners and analyses how books acted and were used as material representatives of the divinity and authority of saintly and historical figures.

5 Closing words

Overall, this collection of essays is a preliminary exploration of an uncharted area lying between manuscript studies and performance studies. We hope it will draw the attention of scholars from both communities to the great scientific

potential of this interdisciplinary approach to our written heritage. We also wish that the various case studies outlined here and the innovative methodologies they often introduce will serve as a basis for developing new and possibly more systematic research programmes on the performative dimension of manuscripts in the wide range of creative processes of an artistic, ritualistic or scientific nature in different cultural settings.

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