

**Patrizia Carmassi, Time and Science in the Liber Floridus of Lambert of Saint-Omer, Turnhout (Brepols) 2022, 270 p., 97 col. fig., ISBN 978-2-503-59692-1, EUR 125,00.**

rezensiert von | compte rendu rédigé par  
**Ellen Arnold, St. Delaware, OH**

This edited volume is about Lambert of St. Omer's »Liber Floridus«, a manuscript that deserves to both be better known and further studied. Lambert finished his encyclopedic »Liber Floridus« around 1121; the work combines history, science, and religious topics and is full of diagrams, scientific images, and calendars. »Time and Science« is one of only a handful of works dedicated to this manuscript. This lavishly illustrated volume grew out of a two-day conference at Orléans that brought together scholars from different disciplines.

This book opens with a brief preface by the editor, Patrizia Carmassi. The essays are divided (somewhat unconvincingly) into three sections: »Manuscripts«; »Texts, Images, Diagrams«; and »Times and Their Declination«. The essays are in both English and French and include analysis of Lambert's autograph manuscript and the later copies of the manuscript. The book is well-produced with extensive and clear full-color images. The end matter includes biographies of all the authors and an »Index of Manuscripts« discussed in the various essays. A comprehensive bibliography or an overview of key secondary literature would have been an important contribution.

The first essay by Carmassi and one of the final essays by Laura Albiero bookend the collection between discussions of »time and science« and »sacred time«. Collectively, these essays highlight the complexity of Lambert's work and worldview. By drawing on both the later copies of the work and earlier scientific works, the authors set Lambert within a larger set of 11<sup>th</sup>-century conversations about time, knowledge, apocalypse, and the meaning of the world.

This volume includes an important contribution by Albert Derolez, the curator emeritus at the Ghent University library who has devoted much of his career to a close and deep codicological analysis of the book. Here Derolez presents his interpretation of the chronological order in which Lambert composed the 325 text sections. This is tricky work, since Lambert rearranged and rewrote sections, folios, and entire quires multiple times. Derolez also makes a case for the »Liber Floridus« being part of a »common encyclopedic project in the minds of members of the abbey of Saint-Bertin and of Lambert of Saint-Omer«.

Hanna Vorholt's »Visual studies for the End of Time«, demonstrates the value of working across the multiple manuscripts, as she focuses on a set of apocalyptic images that are, in fact, missing



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen  
Historischen Institut Paris |  
publiée par l'Institut historique  
allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous  
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

from the Ghent autograph. She uses the six copies that contain the apocalyptic images to understand how the missing apocalypse images interacted with and built on his other images. She argues for the importance of thinking about the images as planned and designed, and about Lambert having had a »visual strategy« in which »composite images« create rich associations back and forth through the manuscript. This interplay, she argues, is a sign that »Lambert’s manuscript was an instrument not just for conveying but also for generating knowledge« (p. 65).

Raffaele Savigni picks up on the same apocalyptic images to argue for the importance of eschatology to Lambert’s world view, and the ways that he was interested in prophecy, prognostication, and in multiple kinds of time. He contrasts the linearity of the histories included in the »Liber Floridus« with Lambert’s interest in »the cyclical time of the seasons and the liturgy« (p. 105) and that history was all racing towards an expected future in which Christ returns. He ties together Lambert’s interest in secular rulers, the six ages of man, and the first Crusade with his fascination with the idea of a looming apocalypse.

Marco Rizzi looks at the chapters that deal with the Antichrist and argues that Lambert’s sense of time and apocalypse combined to mean that he was living in »the beginning of the last days of world history« (p. 90). And yet, as Charles Burnett shows in his explication of the time tables and astronomical charts, Lambert still seemed to have one eye cocked to the future, as there are, in addition to the tables that allow for the calculation of Easter and future saints’ days, several moments of prognostication and prediction. Lambert was, Burnett deftly shows, very interested in »when« he was.

Lambert’s understanding of the coexistence of linear and cyclical time is also the subject of Anja Rathmann-Lutz’s excellent essay, »Between Text and Image«, which includes a complex analysis of Lambert’s images of time, showing that »past, present and future were constantly overlaying each other« (p. 113). She argues that the more than 30 diagrams (which are mostly about astronomy and time) create a rich and interactive reading experience in which »abstract relations become visible« and the interplay between the images creates a »time of the book« in which the reader is suspended (p. 115). In a particularly compelling passage, she describes a »ravel of interwoven dimensions of time focusing on a known future« (p. 118). In an essay on the history sections of Lambert’s work, Christian Heitzmann points to layers of history that exist alongside these ideas of time: world history, local history, and contemporary history (p. 78).

Isabelle Draelants picks up on the importance of the images as a shared »visual encyclopedia« in her essay on the astronomical images of »Draco inter Arctos« where she looks at the astronomical images and traces a genealogy of shared traditions and influences across dozens of manuscripts. Philippe Faure’s contribution tracks the images of angels using similar visual genealogies. Angels are also at the core of Barbara Obrist’s essay, where she links



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen  
Historischen Institut Paris |  
publiée par l’Institut historique  
allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous  
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Lambert's understandings of astronomy and the heavens to celestial order and beings.

As a collection, the pieces are uneven; they are all interesting, but some are only a few pages long while others are over 20. The order of the essays is a bit confusing (Hans Otto Seitschek's overview essay on »Time in Medieval Philosophy« is oddly the last essay). Too many of the pieces re-introduce the manuscripts – a short introduction that provided the basics about at least Lambert and the autograph could have done that work. But those are small concerns, and this volume makes key innovations in the interpretation of the contents of the »Liber Floridus«. Scholars interested in ideas of time, the relation between text and image, history and science, and in apocalyptic ideas will find much of value here.

Collectively, these essays highlight the complexity of Lambert's work and world-view, and the ways that Lambert's own ideas, words, and images changed and evolved over time. By drawing in both the later copies of the work and (in Carmassi's individual contribution) earlier encyclopedic manuscripts, Lambert is set within a larger set of 11<sup>th</sup>-century conversations about time, knowledge, apocalypse, and the meaning of the world.



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen  
Historischen Institut Paris |  
publiée par l'Institut historique  
allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous  
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)