When a Text Becomes a Book: Theoretical Reflections on Paratextuality of Medieval Literature

Organizers: Friederike Richter (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin/University of Zurich) and Lukas Rösli (University of Zurich)
Sponsor: SNSF Ambizione project "Gedächtniskultur im Paratext – Textränder altnordischer Prosahandschriften", University of Zurich

In accordance with the specific theme of the International Medieval Congress (IMC) 2020, *Borders*, and within the proposed sub-section *Paratexts and Borders*, we are seeking papers for a series of sessions on "*When a Text Becomes a Book: Theoretical Reflections on Paratextuality of Medieval Literature*".

The aim is to focus attention on features of medieval literature that are often understood not as part of the text but beyond the borders of the concept of text. According to Gérard Genette,

> "[…] the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public. More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a *threshold*, […] a 'vestibule' that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back." (Genette. 1997. *Paratexts*, p. 1-2)

Genette's theoretical reflections on paratext are mainly based on analyses of literary texts published in serial form after the invention of printing. We would like to use the sessions proposed here to apply the concept of paratexts to pre-modern, medieval text production and its different and diverse understanding of literature. Some of these paratextual features – such as colophons or titles – have been included in studies, but have not necessarily received theoretical reflection on how these features interact with or alter our perception of the text. Many of these features have often been either

modified, eliminated or added later to the form in which the texts are studied, i.e. the form of editions. These characteristics have strongly influenced our perception of medieval literature, although in the form studied they are often based on modern text production. The inclusion of paratextual characteristics of medieval and pre-modern text carriers into studies and the reflection of their *mouvance* as well as their change can stimulate highly productive reflections on the definition of medieval text concepts and their limits. The aim of these sessions is to challenge Genette's paratext theory through medieval books and, if necessary, to adapt it to the concepts of pre-modern text cultures and their specific methodological requirements.

In this context, we invite proposals with a decided theoretical and methodological focus on *Paratextuality of Medieval Literature* for a series of sessions of 20-minute papers to be held at the International Medieval Congress, 6-9 July 2020, at the University of Leeds. We encourage theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches and invite papers exploring but not limited to the following topics:

- Paratexts as thresholds or borders in medieval books
- The relation between a text and its paratexts
- The specifics of medieval paratextuality
- Paratexts and textual memory in medieval literature
- Multimedia paratexts in medieval literature (such as: image/text-relations, miniatures/illuminations and script, text and diagrams, text and musical notation, etc.)
- Medieval paratexts and their afterlife in post-medieval literature

We invite abstracts of 300 words to be sent to friederike.richter@hu-berlin.de and Lukas.roesli@ds.uzh.ch by August 31, 2019, with a view to confirming participants in the sessions by mid-September. Please direct any questions regarding this call for papers to one of the email addresses mentioned above.

To learn more about the SNSF Ambizione project "Gedächtniskultur im Paratext – Textränder altnordischer Prosahandschriften", please visit the homepage: www.ds.uzh.ch/paratext