

Fragmentology

A Journal for the Study of Medieval Manuscript Fragments

Fragmentology is an international, peer-reviewed Open Access journal, dedicated to publishing scholarly articles and reviews concerning medieval manuscript fragments. *Fragmentology* welcomes submissions, both articles and research notes, on any aspect pertaining to Latin and Greek manuscript fragments in the Middle Ages.

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Bart Jaski, Marco Mostert, and Kaj van Vliet, ed., *Perkament in stukken. Teruggevonden middeleeuwse handschriftfragmenten* (Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen, 171), Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren 2018, 280 pp. ISBN 9789087047429.

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Perkament in stukken, ‘parchment in pieces’ is before anything else a celebration of the medieval fragments kept in the University Library of Utrecht and the Utrecht Archive. No less than forty-one people (ranging from graduate students to senior professors) collaborated to write this beautifully designed book, which has been generously illustrated with full-page photographs of the fragments discussed. Its publication went hand-in-hand with an exhibition in the Utrecht Archive in 2018, and the book is therefore aimed at a wide audience. Even though it is not a scholarly book, it provides a great introduction to the study of fragments, which it shows in impressive variety. At the same time, several authors underline that this is just a first exploration: the University Library alone holds about 750 fragments, with several thousand more still awaiting discovery in existing book-bindings.

The volume has three introductions, in which the editors each offer their own perspective on the subject. Marco Mostert explains how fragments as a subject for research has existed since about 1700, undergoing a notable revival in the past fifty years. All the same, the results of such research usually do not go beyond description, even though fragments offer opportunities to reconstruct lost libraries, for instance, or to ask wider questions about medieval literacy. Bart Jaski introduces the material kept in the Utrecht University Library by sketching the way in which books from the libraries of a whole series of churches, chapters, monasteries and learned individuals

in the Utrecht area ended up in the University Library. Many books from these collections contain the cut-up remains of discarded manuscripts, which sometimes allow the reconstruction of lost libraries, for instance that of the Utrecht Abbey of St Paul. Kaj van Vliet in his introduction briefly describes the little research that the Utrecht fragments have inspired thus far – but this has changed since 2016, when Utrecht graduate students became actively involved in the description and research of the fragments. This book is also a tribute to their hard work: more than half of the authors are (former) students who took part in these ‘fragment-classes’.

The core of the volume consists of 38 brief chapters, organised thematically in broad categories such as ‘liturgy’, ‘law’ and ‘science’, and selected to illustrate the full breadth of what the Utrecht collections have on offer. Each chapter discusses a single fragment, ranging from small strips to complete bifolia, from Carolingian to the sixteenth century, from small and grubby to beautifully written and decorated. Many fragments tell new stories, and here we come to what is probably the most exciting aspect of the book. One ninth-century fragment (c. 14), discovered by students in 2016, contains a commentary on the Holy Trinity by the third-century ‘anti-pope’ Novatian, a text thus far only known through an edition from the sixteenth century. Another fragment (ch. 8), dated to around 1200, contains the first eight lines of a song in praise of Willibrord. This text also appears in an Echternach manuscript, but the Utrecht fragment contains musical notation (neumes written on lines) that has allowed musicologists to reconstruct the melody. Yet another ninth-century fragment (c. 7) sheds new light on the development of liturgical books in the early middle ages, in this case that from sacramentary to missal.

Not only the texts, but also other aspects of the fragments get attention, for instance decoration (c. 20), ‘the green monster’ ink corrosion (c. 35), or striking forms of re-use. One instance of the latter is the re-use of large leaves from a sixteenth-century antiphonary, which were sewn into envelopes to keep proof of inoculation against smallpox in the early twentieth century. From such attention to a range of different aspects, the reader discovers how this is an interdisciplinary field of study: the eyes of historians, liturgists,

palaeographers, art historians and musicologists respectively each see different things, and together paint a colourful panorama of Utrecht as a city of manuscripts. One aspect that could have done with more attention is how this city of manuscripts was connected to the wider world: many fragments reflect aspects of local history, but others show interesting connections with the wider world. For instance, fragments of a Salernitan medical compendium, of a Jewish-Arabic text containing dietary knowledge, and of a legal text from Bologna show how Utrecht was a city reached by traditions of knowledge from everywhere, centuries before the university was founded.

After going through this dazzling panorama of ‘parchment in pieces’, the reader cannot help but wonder what else is out there in unexplored library collections, early-modern book bindings, and in forgotten boxes on the shelves of archives. The appearance of this book will hopefully stimulate interest in this line of research, for if this is, indeed, just the beginning, we are surely in for many surprises in future.