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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Review

Giovanni Varelli, ed., *Disiecta Membra Musicae: Studies in Musical Fragmentology* (Studies in Manuscript Cultures, 21), Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 2020, VI + 398 pp., ISBN 97819121680 71.

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Manuscript fragments have long been the subject of scholarly research, but recent years have seen a rapid and significant surge in interest in the topic, largely in response to the proliferation of new digital tools that have helped collate and disseminate local fragment holdings to an ever-growing population of scholars around the world. Numerous topics and approaches lie at the heart of this new 'fragmentological' impulse, including the reconstruction of lost codices from their constituent and often widely dispersed fragmentary parts; provenance history, the historic manuscript trade, and patterns of fragment collecting; paleographical and art historical inquiry; and the varied contexts and "second lives" of manuscripts that have been cut up and recycled in so many different ways (from book bindings and fabric stiffeners to saddle padding and lampshades). In his foreword to the volume reviewed here, Giovanni Varelli credits much of this scholarly interest to the "ex-centricity" (and, by extension, eccentricity) of fragments. Their very "unexpectedness" and dislocated-ness from their original codicological, textual, and cultural contexts challenge more traditional understandings of the materiality of manuscripts and the methodological and historiographical approaches more typically used in projects that focus on intact and complete codices (p. 1). Varelli goes on to point out that this "ex-centricity" necessarily lies at the heart of medieval musicological study given the degree to which so much of our collective knowledge of medieval music and musical culture relies solely on fragmentary evidence. Unlikely though it may seem

given musicologists' long familiarity with fragments as valuable—or in many cases, the *only*—material or textual evidence underlying their work, this volume of twelve essays is the first to focus entirely on musical fragments as a specific target of study. In particular, the essays presented here provide a range of discussions of and models for the various methods of investigation involved in fragmentological inquiry related to musical sources.

In the volume's first essay, "Polyphonic Fragments: Destruction, Recovery, Reconstruction," Margaret Bent provides an insightful and handy overview of the various accidents behind and motivations for the historical fragmentation of musical manuscripts, whether for functional utility (such as the recycling of fragments in book bindings or inside the workings of organs or lutes), textual and musical revision (e. g. instances of manuscript cannibalization in which a later hand has cut out initials and pasted them in new locations to reuse them in a new repertory, only to discard the now-mutilated original pages in the process), or for dismembering manuscripts to prioritize and commercialize their artistic contents (a practice that began in earnest in the nineteenth century as art collectors eagerly sought illuminated choir book initials for their growing collections). The remains of the destructive (or reconstructive) activities Bent outlines provide the subjects for the volume's remaining essays, all of which interestingly demonstrate how even the smallest musical fragment might shed light on the development of a specific national or regional musical tradition, provide insight into different forms of liturgical genres and practice, and suggest new ways of looking at fragments not just as isolated and disjunct reminders of their original purpose and use, but as re-tasked objects that often convey new significance and meaning within their new codicological or artefactual contexts.

Susan Rankin's article on early-medieval Processional chants cogently demonstrates how, in many cases, the evidence preserved by surviving fragments flies in the face of established narratives about the evolution of liturgical manuscripts. Her analysis of two sets of late-tenth century musical fragments from eastern Switzerland reveals, for instance, that the Processional likely emerged as a formal textual genre much earlier than traditional scholarship has

tended to believe. Rankin makes an important point here about the utility of fragments, noting that much of the existing scholarly narrative about medieval musicological history is predominantly based on studies of the few surviving complete, or nearly complete, codices of particular genres. Similarly, David Hilley's essay reveals how fragments of plainchant offices can preserve important and unique details about localized saint-based devotion (in this case, in twelfth-century Austria and southern Germany) that might otherwise not be preserved in codices.

The essays by Jurij Snoj, David Catalunya, and Pawel Gancarczyk focus on how the systematic study of fragments can help paint a more complete picture of medieval musical practice in specific geographic areas. Snoj reports on his systematic search for musical fragments located in libraries across Slovenia, resulting in the discovery of 618 complete and incomplete folios and 158 smaller musical scraps collectively stemming from 222 original parent codices. His analysis and interpretation of this significant body of evidence reveals numerous points of interest related to the relationship between Latin and Old Church Slavonic, the influence of political affiliations within the Holy Roman Empire on the notational styles used to render music in manuscript sources, and the circumstances within which these 222 original codices were likely fragmented, recycled, and dispersed. Catalunya's examination of polyphonic fragments from fourteenth-century Aragon challenges earlier scholarly tendencies to attribute the creation of many of these fragments' original parent codices to the royal household in Barcelona. Careful analysis of scribal hands, the arrangement of manuscript contents, and the overall quality of writing supports and decorative schemes strongly suggest that the creation of many of these manuscripts in various centers across the region by scribes and book makers was influenced by the itinerant activities of the royal court. In his essay on polyphonic fragments in central Europe, Gancarczyk argues for the importance of determining which questions or considerations governed decisions about what a community chose to preserve versus what they opted to discard. His investigation of the manuscripts used by Czech Utraquists points out how the preservation of codices

and the creation of fragments helped forge and maintain communal identity.

Building upon this notion of how fragments and their (re)use help define community, Sanna Raninen's essay examines how Scandinavian Protestants incorporated earlier medieval musical sources into their new reformed liturgical practices. In contrast to the more rapid impact that Lutheran reform had in regions such as Germany and England, Raninen notes that the pace of change in Scandinavian liturgical practice was slow. Despite a steady move toward a heavier reliance on the vernacular and the emergence of new practices of worship as the Reformation progressed, Latin and older medieval liturgical forms remained current in many Protestant books well into the sixteenth century, with earlier musical manuscripts updated to accommodate evolving Protestant liturgical needs.

In what I found to be perhaps the volume's most compelling essay, Karl Kügle argues that we should not so easily accept the longstanding and widespread assumption that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century book binders reused manuscript fragments as pastedowns solely in random or utilitarian ways. Through a series of four case studies, Kügle offers persuasive evidence of how binders may have deliberately chosen and positioned specific manuscript fragments as pastedowns in order to extend and complement the texts and music these fragments now encompassed and bound. It could be argued that the significances outlined in each case study are nothing more than coincidental; however, Kügle's contention that the selection and placement of fragments in recycled contents may have been intentional in certain cases opens up entirely new avenues for the comparative and complementary analysis of early books.

The pair of essays by Reinhard Strohm and Danielle Sabaino explore how manuscript fragments—and traces of manuscript fragmentation—can be packaged and preserved in later manuscript miscellanies that convey the specific interests and wider cultural frameworks involved in manuscript production, compilation, and use. Strohm considers a compilation of ten polyphonic and twenty plainsong pieces written by twelve scribes in six different forms of musical notation, arguing that this collection of 'fragments' is not a

random compilation, but a condensed *florilegium* for organists deliberately added to—and consequently preserved within—a larger codex. Sabaino's essays analyzes how adiastemmatic notation found accompanying an early Italian vernacular poem might help reconstruct the lost structure and melody for an early song. Although much of Sabaino's argument stretches beyond the scope of my own knowledge of medieval notation and musical transcription, this essay does forward a convincing *possible* case that both the poetry text and the accompanying notation are, indeed, intentionally related. More importantly for the purposes of this volume, however, is how this study demonstrates how exceptionally important sources with complex questions surrounding them can be discovered in fragmentary form and studied to productive and surprising effect.

The volume's final two essays demonstrate the utility of modern digital approaches toward fragmentological research. Zsuzsa Czagány offers an overview of the work of the Institute for Musicology's (Budapest) Digital Musical Fragmentology group and its website, *Fragmenta Manuscriptorum Musicalium Hungariae Mediaevalis*, along with a pair of case studies detailing how this online resource has assisted efforts to reconstruct a pair of broken fifteenth-century musical manuscripts. In the collection's final essay, Julia Craig-McFeely discusses the forensic reconstruction of damaged manuscript folios via the assistance of different digital methods, with an emphasis on the capacity of digital imaging to allow scholars to combine and layer multiple manipulated images of the same folio to help uncover hidden information about a fragment's material, textual, artistic, and musical contents and contexts. Perhaps most importantly, Craig-McFeely also addresses the ethics of digital intervention in manuscript reconstruction, noting the importance of carefully guiding readers' awareness and interpretation of how—and why—digital images of particular manuscripts may have been edited and manipulated. Together, these two concluding essays point out the capacity of digital technologies and methodologies to push forward fragmentological research in new and exciting ways.

All in all, the twelve essays included in this volume work together to demonstrate the various ways that the careful consideration of

fragmentary manuscript evidence can help us reinterpret—and in some cases even rewrite—what we know about medieval musical culture, liturgical practice, and manuscript recycling and reuse. Collectively, these fascinating examples of fragmentological research prove that though often frustratingly incomplete, manuscript fragments should not, and cannot, be ignored.