

Classics on Scraps: Classical Manuscripts Made from Parchment Waste

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A striking feature of classical manuscripts from the medieval period is the broad range of their physical traits. As with other manuscript traditions, classical books are made from different writing support materials, their contents are presented in a range of layouts, and their dimensions vary from small books the size of a deck of cards, to some of the largest manuscripts produced in medieval times. However, surveying a selection of classical manuscripts from the eleventh and twelfth centuries reveals a phenomenon by which these books may well stand out from many other manuscript traditions: the notably high number of lower-grade copies. That is to say, a relatively large number of classical texts from these centuries have been copied in a lower-grade script and on medium to poor quality parchment. Moreover, such low-quality books are more likely to lack any decoration, apart perhaps from some plain penwork flourishing executed by the scribe himself.¹ High-quality classical manuscripts were made over the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, of course, but the distinct impression one gets is that the low-quality ones are far more common, perhaps even the norm.²

This essay is concerned with a classical manuscript of particularly low quality: VLO 92. It is a composite volume

I wish to thank Rodney Thomson for reading and commenting upon an earlier version of this essay.

1. See in this respect, Munk Olsen, 'The Production of the Classics', 16, ('these books [rarely] attain the high level of decorative attention given to Bibles and patristic texts').

2. This impression reflects my own experience as well as the results of two studies I supervised: an internship devoted to manuscripts from 1075-1225 in the Leiden, Biblioteca Publica Latina (BPL), which included twenty-eight classical books (Marjolein de Vos, 2012-13); and an MA thesis devoted to twenty-five classical manuscripts from 1050-1250, which included an assessment of the parch-

ment quality (Laura Luchtenburg, 2014). Also compare the online facsimiles of eleventh- and twelfth-century classical manuscripts presented in *E-codices*, available online at <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch>, accessed 4 July, 2014, which are nearly all low-quality in the way described here.

3. Contents and description in De Meyier, *Codices Vossiani Latini, Pars III*, 171-7 (dating of third booklet my own, see below). The second booklet is described in more detail in Beccaria, *I Codici di Medicina del periodo presalernitano*, nr. 115, at 338-9.

4. For Prudentius and his oeuvre, see Thomson, trans., *Prudentius* (Loeb Classical Library); Conte, *Latin Literature*, 664-7; Browning, 'Poetry', 30-2; and McGill, 'Latin Poetry', 347-8.

5. See Conte, *Latin Literature*, 694 (Rufinus), and 642-3 (Marius Victorinus). Also in the booklet is Isidore, d. 636 (*Sententiae*, fols. 12v line 5-125v line 16). Some regard him as classical as well, see Reynolds, 'Preface', xiii; and Conte, *Latin Literature*, 720-2.

of modest proportions (145x135 mm) consisting of three booklets made in the tenth and eleventh centuries, likely in France.³ All three contain classical works from either pagan or Christian authors. The first booklet contains a commentary on Priscian's *Carmina christiana* copied in the tenth century (fols. 1-32). The second booklet (fols. 33-121), copied c. 900-25, comprises four medical tracts, the largest of which is Pliny's *Medicinae* (fols. 33r-78v). The third booklet (fols. 122-55), which will be the focus of this essay, was copied in the early eleventh century. The main classical work found here is a commentary on the oeuvre of the late-antique Latin Christian poet Prudentius (the 'Christian Horace'), including on his *Cathemerinon*, *Peristephanon*, and *Psychomachia* (fols. 126r-149v line 15).⁴ In addition, the booklet contains excerpts from at least two other authors commonly regarded as classical: Rufinus of Aquileia, d. 411 (*Historia ecclesiastica*, fols. 123v line 11-124r) and Marius Victorinus, d. after 362 (*Candidi Arriani ad Marium Victorinum rhetorem de generatione divina*, fols. 124r line 5-124v line 5).⁵

While the three booklets are presently contained in an eighteenth-century bookbinding, it is not known when they were originally bound together, or even if they were together during the medieval period. Given that the three parts were produced at different times, however, we may assume that each booklet was used as a separate entity before ending up in the present composite volume. For the third part this is visible from the wear-and-tear on its first and last pages (fols. 122r and 155v), which also shows the booklet was used for some time without a binding or cover. The dark and stained surface of the parchment is, after all, typically produced by frequent movement across a desk, and thus points to an independent use prior to its current binding. The three parts

were probably united because of the similarity of their page dimensions.

As stated, the main focus of this essay is the third booklet, which represents the far end of the spectrum, an extreme, as far as quality and care of production are concerned: its leaves were not just constructed from parchment sheets of lower quality, but from the waste material that was left over during the cutting of the sheets. The present study will first demonstrate that waste parchment was used, after which the discussion will be broadened, showing that the Leiden booklet is not an isolated case but a distinguishable type of classical manuscript. Before we turn to the unusual writing support, however, the script of the main scribe will be examined, in part because this palaeographical analysis helps to explain why leftover parchment was used.

Script

According to De Meyier's manuscript description, the third booklet of VLO 92 was perhaps produced in France. While the script is very difficult to localise, French origins are conceivable, if only because distinct German, English, and Italian traits are largely missing. There may be possible evidence of English origins, given that the main scribe is an early adopter of Gothic feet at minims, as discussed shortly. However, all considering, the evidence is not enough to place the manuscript's origins in England.⁶ The miscellany was copied by two hands. The first, Scribe A, wrote from the very beginning of the booklet, at fol. 122r, up to fol. 152r, near the end of line 1. His duct is highly variable, to the extent that at times one is inclined to attribute parts of his stint to other individuals (such as, for example, the section starting at line 19 on fol. 133v, and the segment on fol. 149r-v, line 15). In his

6. I wish to thank Teresa Webber and Peter Stokes for a discussion that helped me form this opinion about the booklet's origins.

7. De Meyier, *Codices Vossiani Latini, Pars III*, 175.

8. Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books*, 58. The chronology is my own and will be discussed in more detail in a monograph I am preparing on the birth of Gothic script.

description of the manuscript De Meyier concludes that the codex was written by a main scribe whose work is interrupted by eight stints from multiple other hands.⁷ However, it is my opinion that the booklet was largely copied by a single individual who used a highly variable duct. This is indicated most clearly by a distinctive long *s* that appears throughout Scribe A's stint (although this type is not used exclusively): the top of this *s* leans backward, it is thinner than the body, features a sharp hook, and sometimes appears composite, as if the top were added with a separate stroke. A second person, Scribe B, takes over at fol. 152r near the end of line 1, first completing that line and subsequently copying until the end of fol. 154r. The remainder of the booklet was copied by Scribe A (fols. 154v-155r).

While the booklet is commonly dated to the tenth century, placing its origins in the eleventh century would perhaps seem more appropriate. We need to look more closely at the script. The oldest 'offcut manuscript' so far identified can be dated to the middle of the twelfth century, as will be discussed shortly. Since the third booklet in VLO 92 is, in fact, older, and will take over that distinction, it is worthwhile to determine the booklet's exact moment of production. The discussion will be limited to the main hand, Scribe A, and will focus on two distinctive palaeographical features.

The first of these is 'angularity', or the flattening of round strokes, a practice first used in the limb of *h* and flag of *r*, later followed by the round top part of other letters, including *b*, *c*, *e*, and *o*.⁸ The third booklet in VLO 92 frequently shows such angularity in *b*, *p*, and *r* (though never consistent on all its pages) and occasionally in *c* and *o* (again, never consistently). Palaeographical handbooks define this feature as Gothic, relating its emergence to the development

of an early form of Gothic script called *Littera praegothica*, the roots of which tend to be placed in the late eleventh century.⁹ However, a close look at manuscripts present in the *Catalogues des manuscrits datés* (CMD) suggests that angularity, a key feature of Gothic, was very frequently used during the first half of the eleventh century as well. Among the forty manuscripts from 1000-1049 in the CMD, no less than thirty include angularity: twenty-seven of these present the feature in a mixed form (where a single manuscript presents both angular and non-angular presentations for the same letter) and an additional three do so consistently (the scribe always opts for an angular presentation).¹⁰ More importantly for our dating of the third booklet, the feature rarely appears in the tenth century. It is, at any rate, encountered in only one of the nine manuscripts from that century included in the CMD. The manuscript in question was produced, moreover, in the very late tenth century and presents a mixed use of the feature (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, 183, datable to 933-1004).¹¹

The same goes for the second early Gothic feature present in the script of Scribe A: the direction of the feet at minims. Observation, for example, of the letters **m** and **n**, which are the clearest indicators in this respect, reveals that their feet are sometimes executed in the Caroline style (meaning that the first minim, and in case of **m** also the second, turns to the left), while at other times the scribe shapes these minims in the Gothic fashion (meaning all feet turn to the right). The latter is also regarded as a feature of *Littera praegothica* and its emergence is therefore commonly tied to the late eleventh century.¹² While this feature is much more rare in the first half of the eleventh century than angularity, the CMD shows that it does occur this early: three manuscripts

9. For this script, see Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books*, 65-71. Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books* places the birth of pregothic in the late eleventh century (at 56), while Brown, *A Guide to Western Historical Scripts from Antiquity to 1600* (73) and Schneider, *Paläographie und Handschriftenkunde für Germanisten* (28) place it in the late eleventh or early twelfth century.

10. These three are Avranches, BM, 98 (Normandy, Mont-Saint-Michel, 991-1009), BnF, lat. 17275 (France, Cluny, 1022-1026), and BL, Royal 5 A.xi (Normandy, St Bertin, 1022-1041).

11. I am indebted to my research assistant, Ramona Venema (Leiden), for gathering and processing the data for the period 1000-1049 and the tenth century.

12. For this feature, see Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books*, 58-9.

13. Consistent Gothic feet: BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, part 1, fols. 2-73 (England, Winchester?, 995-1016); BL, Royal 5 A.xi (France, St Bertin, 1022-41); and Rouen, BM, 272 (France, St Wandrille, 1033-53). Mixed Caroline-Gothic feet: CUL, Kk.5.32 (England, Exeter, 1021).

14. For some clear-cut cases, see Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, Fig. 9 at 276 (Anglo-Saxon), Plate 12 at 289 (Latin), Plates 14-15 at 291-2 (AS), Plate 20 at 297 (AS). See also Ker, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, Plate II (1000-1050, Latin and AS).

15. I wish to thank Francis Newton for looking at the script of Scribe A, and confirming my rationale for re-dating it. He too opts for a date in the early eleventh century.

among the forty from 1000-1049 exhibit consistent Gothic feet in **m** and **n**, and one other presents a mix of Caroline and Gothic.¹³ While Gothic feet are not seen among the tenth-century manuscripts in the CMD, they do occur in tenth-century manuscripts and charters made in one particular European region: England. A surprising number of items copied in English Vernacular Minuscule during the period 990-1035, for example, show consistent 'Gothic' feet in **m** and **n**, as well as in other letter forms with minims, such as **h**. This feature occurs in both Anglo-Saxon and Latin writing samples.¹⁴

All in all, a date in the tenth century appears unlikely for Scribe A, given his use of two early Gothic features. Furthermore, the script's aspect, in particular the size of the letters and their round appearance, is in tune with what we see in the eleventh century. While it is difficult to say for sure when the booklet was precisely copied, the height of the ascenders still have a tenth-century feel. The most probable date is therefore the first half of the eleventh century, perhaps even the first quarter.¹⁵

The execution of the script provides us with other valuable information, in particular some notable irregularities. First of all, the size of the script varies considerably, with larger and smaller versions of letters found on the same page, sometimes even in the same line. There are other palaeographical inconsistencies as well, such as the varying amount of white space found between the lines. An explanation is found when we look at these locations more carefully: Scribe A sometimes places the letters *on* the ruled line, while in other cases the dry point ruling appears halfway up the letter height, which produces an uneven distribution of lines on the page. The thickness of the strokes varies as well, which suggests that the

nib of the pen was not always cut in the same manner. The actual execution of individual letter shapes, moreover, varies considerably. The ascenders and descenders, for example, are of unequal length, while many letters are shaped slightly differently, even when placed close together. This is particularly notable in **a**, **g**, and long **s**. All this adds up to an important conclusion, that Scribe A probably proceeded without optimal care, and possibly at high speed. We will return to the issue of care later.

Offcuts

Having dealt with palaeographical issues, we now turn to the actual focus of this essay, the unusual kind of parchment used for the production of the third booklet of VLO 92 (fols. 122-155). At the heart of the discussion is a type of writing support that has attracted little attention in the context of medieval book production: superfluous strips of parchment that were left over when animal skins were turned into sheets.¹⁶ To claim that the booklet was made from this material, as this essay sets out to do, it is necessary to shift our attention to this waste material for a moment.

There were two ways by which sheets – bifolia – were retrieved from animal skins. In the first scenario the scribe cut rectangular sheets out of an unfolded skin, which lay flat on his desk. Depending on the type and size of the animal, a skin would generally produce one to four bifolia. The zone from which the sheets were taken can be called the ‘prime cut’ in that it represents the (central) part of the skin that provided the most optimal writing surface. The outer rim of the skin, by contrast, was deemed unsuitable, given the presence of certain defects, to be described shortly. This outer rim was thus removed, usually in several cuts. As a result, when

16. The following introduction to offcuts and their properties leans heavily on my ‘Discarded Parchment as Writing Support’, 239-41, where the matter is discussed in more detail.

17. See the discussion in my 'Discarded Parchment', 254.

18. The following section summarizes the more in-depth discussion in Kwakkel, 'Discarded Parchment', 240-1.

the person cutting the sheets had finished, he not only had a pile of rectangular sheets on his table but also a number of irregularly-shaped strips of waste parchment.

The second scenario shows the reverse: the animal skin was first folded and then trimmed. If the skin was of modest proportions, or if the planned manuscript was large, the skin was folded only once, along the long side, which created a single bifolium. The skin could also be folded once along its short side, but this seems to have been an exceptional practice. It produced, after all, a manuscript with extremely high and narrow pages that looked 'off'. The only book produced in this fashion that I know of is the late twelfth-century Bodleian, Junius 1, the 'Ormmulum', which measures an astonishing *c.* 500x195 mm.¹⁷ If a skin was large enough it could be folded not just once, but perhaps up to three times, which produced an entire quire of four double sheets. After folding, the skin needed to be trimmed, for the same reason as in the first scenario: to remove the unsuitable outer rim, which was still included in the bifolium or quire. When the scribe had completed his work, his desk was littered with redundant strips of waste parchment, as in the first scenario.

Thus scraps of parchment, 'offcuts', were a by-product of making bifolia. They effectively represent the difference between the shape of the skin and that of the rectangular 'prime cut' that formed the basis for the actual sheet or sheets. While their shape and length varied considerably, all waste strips had deficiencies indicative of their peripheral position on the skin.¹⁸ The most pronounced of these deficiencies are concavities. First there are the holes that appeared as the skin was drying on a wooden frame. The skin was held in place by short ropes that were wrapped around pebbles pushed into the wet material. As the skin dried, the area around the

pebbles stretched, producing half-moon shapes between any two attachment points. Another type of concavity was more ‘shallow’ and located in the axilla area behind the forelegs and in front of the hind legs of the animal. Smaller gaps, lastly, appeared when the parchment maker removed the skin from the frame. To do so he had to cut away the pebbles, which were now embedded in the dried, hardened skin. When scissors were used for this, a small channel would sometimes have to be made in the skin, from the edge to the pebble; these, too, are found in offcuts.

There are other kinds of deficiencies found on the strips. The regions near the neck, rump, forelegs, and hind legs contained deposits of fat, which resulted in thick, stiff, and translucent patches when the skin was turned into parchment. In fact, in these parts of the skin the material can be so translucent that sometimes the text from the next folium is visible (Plate 11). Moreover, the surface was usually treated less rigorously than the prime cut (it is difficult to sand the skin’s somewhat lumpy edge) and so it shows imperfections, often very clearly, which are not commonly found on sheets taken from the prime cut: follicle patterns, streaks from the parchment-maker’s knife (the *lunellum*), and discoloration (brown or yellow ‘stains’). In some places the surface is very glossy and slippery, while in other instances it can be rough. Often, the ink would not ‘take’ properly in these locations when written on, producing a faded text that can be difficult to read.

Considering their small size and poor appearance it is not surprising that this waste material was commonly boiled down for glue, rather than used for the production of books. Judging from the following entry in a dictionary from the 1470s, their size in particular was deemed problematic: ‘Ce-

19. Hoffmann, 'Beschreibung', 277, as noted in Wattenbach, *Schriftwesen*, 124, n. 1. Hoffmann identifies the dictionary as an incunable from the 1470s, printed by Günther Zainer in Augsburg (280).

20. Kwakkel, 'Discarded Parchment', 246-55. In addition to the examples listed, there is Worcester, Cathedral Library, Q. 18 (*Collationes*, c. 1300), see Thomson, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, 130 (I wish to thank Rodney Thomson for drawing my attention to this specimen).

21. Kwakkel, 'Discarded Parchment', 247-8 (Welsh manuscripts) and 255 (Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, 3067-73). Description of the latter in Kwakkel, *Dit zijn die Dietsche boeke die ons toebehoeren*, 227-33.

22. Description in Vattasso and Carusi, *Codices Vatican Latini: Codices 9852-10300*, 618-9 (date is my own). The photographs I used for this assessment are part of an image database set up under the direction of Monica Green (Arizona State University). The images

dula, zedel, est pars pergameni, de qua propter sui parvitatem non potest fieri liber aptus' [An off-cut, or zedel, is a bit of parchment from which no proper book can be made because it is too small].¹⁹ In spite of this verdict, however, some scribes *did* use the material to this end. In a first exploration of the phenomenon, published in 2012, I was able to identify several 'offcut manuscripts' from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁰ What binds them is not just the presence of discoloration, translucent patches, and pronounced follicle patterns, but also their modest dimensions: they rarely exceed a page height of 150 mm. For example, two Welsh medical manuscripts from the fourteenth century measure only 120x90 mm and 135x100 mm (Oxford, Jesus College, 20 and Bodleian, Rawlinson B. 467, respectively), while a Middle Dutch composite manuscript whose twelve parts are all made from scraps measures 130x90 mm (Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, 3067-73, see Plate 12).²¹ The oldest identified manuscript is a medical ('Articella') codex from the second quarter of the twelfth century (BAV, Vat. lat. 10281), measuring 152x103 mm. Here too, we encounter pages that frequently fall short, show discoloration and follicle patterns, and contain substantial gaps, sometimes accompanied by stretch marks.²²

The Evidence

Returning to the third booklet of VLO 92, the evidence that offcuts were used for its production is overwhelming: literally every folium shows the deficiencies that are typical of such scraps. Usually several are found on the same page. Starting with discoloration, nearly every page shows a surface colour that appears more yellow than one would expect. Many are, moreover, dark yellow or brown. There are examples of

brown patches interfering with reading the text, which appears faded in such cases (see for example fol. 125r, lower corner, and fol. 151v, central part of page). Many folia show a pronounced follicle pattern as well as horny patches, which feel hard and stiff. In some instances translucent patches are encountered. Another typical surface defect of offcuts, lastly, is seen on fols. 139v, 144v, 145v, 153r and 155r, where the ink did not take. The text is faded and the surface feels rougher on these pages.

More pronounced defects are the gaps visible on nearly every folium. They come in four categories: 1) Round concavities of limited width, measuring 20-40 mm in diameter and usually in the shape of an oval or a half circle, as seen on fols. 123, 131, 133, 136, and 147 (Plate 13); 2) Broad gaps with a roundish shape that may take up the entire width or height of the page, as present at fols. 127, 135, 141, and 152 (Plate 14); 3) Missing corners featuring a straight edge (fols. 123, 124, 128, 132, 139, 143, and 144), some of them being only 5 mm short (as in fol. 144, lower corner), others substantially more (the missing corners at fols. 150 and 151 'cut' into a third of the page's height) (Plate 15); 4) Gaps in the inner margin, in or near the gutter (fols. 124, 131, 138, 141, and 147) (Plate 16).

The first category probably represents strips that were taken from the area near the neck of the beast, or near the forelegs or hind legs. The second category of gaps results from the stretching of the skin between two attachment points (locations where the skin was tied to the drying frame). Strips taken from these zones typically show long and elongated gaps, as discussed. The third category – missing corners – are the result of the scribe cutting away the narrow holes of the first category. This practice could have

in question were submitted to the database by Tess Tavormina (Michigan State University). I wish to thank both scholars for allowing me to use their photographic material.

23. The only text loss is found at fol. 155, where a strip of parchment 35 mm in width was cut vertically along the long side of the page. This was done post-production.

an aesthetic motivation (it looked more ‘finished’), or perhaps it had a more pragmatic purpose, given that it may have been easier to turn a page when the missing corner had a straight edge. The fourth category has two explanations. In the first, the strip that was used for the bifolium contained a large hole (as in fols. 138/141 – here and below, a slash indicates a bifolium). In the second explanation the edge of the used offcut sloped significantly, with the result that the middle of the strip was not as high as the manuscript, causing a gap to appear in the fold. Scribes usually lined up the strip in such a way that this gap appeared at the lower edge of the manuscript (see Plate 16).

As a result of the inclusion of gaps, a folium may turn out to be short in its height or width. In fact, only six folia in the entire booklet are regular in that they form a perfect rectangular shape representing the required dimensions of 143x135 mm: fols. 125 and 130 (which form the fourth bifolium in quire 1); fols. 134 and 154 (forming the first bifolium in quire 2); and fols. 137 and 142 (the fourth bifolium in quire 3). Notably, all remaining folia of the booklet fall short on one or both sides. There are no signs of text loss, suggesting that these imperfect folia were designed this way by the scribe.²³ The second category in particular – elongated gaps running along a substantial part of the page’s short or long side – caused significant loss of surface space. These elongated holes often run along the entire width of the page, giving its lower edge a slightly sloping appearance. It also happens that a page is shorter in height or width than the others, even though the edge is perfectly straight. For example, the fifth bifolium of quire 1 (fols. 126/129) is only 82–95 mm high, so roughly 40 mm shorter in height than the other leaves; the individual folia are 100 mm wide, making

their width 35 mm shorter than the others. However, the bifolium in question has straight edges, suggesting that its incompleteness was not caused by concavities. Other leaves of this kind are fols. 139/140 (a bifolium), 148/153 (a bifolium), fol. 149 (a singleton) and fol. 154 (a singleton).

The probable explanation for these cases is that the offcut chosen for the job was not big enough to form a complete bifolium. They show that the scribe did not mind using waste material that was substantially smaller than the dimensions he had decided to give to the manuscript. In this respect the presence of the singletons makes perfect sense as well. This compromise allowed the scribe to include small strips that were unsuitable for the production of actual bifolia (Plate 17). Indeed, the two singletons mentioned above (149 and 154) measure only 143x110 and 143x105 mm, smaller than a deck of cards. There are other singletons found in the manuscript. Observing the quire structure of the codex reveals that three bifolia are actually composite, meaning they consist of two singletons folded together to form a single bifolium.²⁴

The practice of combining two offcuts into one bifolium is seen in other offcut manuscripts as well, such as the first of the Brussels booklets mentioned above (Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, 3067-73). Another way to combine two smaller strips was to use a second offcut to fill up a large concavity in the first, or to glue two offcuts together to extend the size of the bifolium and thus the size of the book. Both practices are encountered in Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, 733B (Langland, *Piers Plowman*, 1400-1425).²⁵ Scribe A of our VLO 92 booklet did not make it easy for himself when he included multiple composite bifolia. It was only in the binding stage, when the stitches

24. The collation formula for the manuscript is 1^{vi} [fols. 124/131 composite bifolium] (133), 2^{vi} (145), 3^{vi} [fols. 147/154 and 149/152 composite bifolium] (155).

25. Kwakkel, 'Discarded Parchment', 252-3.

26. Munk Olsen, *L'étude des auteurs classiques latins aux X^e et XI^e siècles: Tome IV*, 157.

27. The Munich booklets below can be consulted online at <http://www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de>, accessed 7 July, 2014, the URLs of the other specimens are provided. Nr. 2 is the only one I studied *in situ*. My research assistant, Ramona Venema, traced the manuscripts with a height below 150 mm.

28. Munk Olsen, *L'étude des auteurs classiques latins: Tome I*, 168. Online facsimile at <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/bke/0154>, accessed 7 July, 2014.

went through their folded gutters, that two singletons became securely attached. Until then the scribe would have to look after the pairs at all times, making sure they would stay together while other folia were shuffled around on his desk.

Classics on Scraps

The Leiden booklet adds to our understanding of the classical manuscript tradition, to which a book made from offcuts is identified for the first time. While lower-quality books appear common in the manuscript tradition of the classics, the Leiden scrap booklet takes a special position, at the bottom end of the scale. Moreover, it is by no means an isolated case. Among the smallest surviving classical manuscripts from the eleventh and twelfth centuries other specimens are hiding. In the fourth volume of his *L'étude des auteurs classiques latins aux X^e et XI^e siècles*, Munk Olsen notes that a considerable number of classical manuscripts have a page height of 150 mm or less: five survive from the tenth century, seven from the eleventh century and thirty-seven from the twelfth century.²⁶ While he does not provide their shelfmarks, these small classical books may be identified from the manuscript descriptions found in two other volumes of his publication. With the help of online facsimiles several offcut manuscripts with classical contents may be identified in addition to the Leiden booklet:²⁷

1. Engelberg, SB, 154 (Cicero, *De inventione*, Engelberg, 1143-1178, 125 fols., 121x95 mm).²⁸ Features: surface deficiencies are rare except for the occasional horny patch (e.g. at pp. 19, 27, and 48); gaps of category 1 (e.g. pp. 34/35, 48/49), category 2 (e.g. pronounced at pp. 73/74, more subtle on many other folia) and category 3 (e.g. pp. 22/23,

35/36, and 40/41), although usually not very significant; rectangular sheet that is significantly short (pp. 70/71); high volume of singletons that form composite bifolia, as shown by the presence of stubs (e.g. before pp. 11, 14, 31, 47, and 50). The scribe probably opted for a codex with such limited dimensions because it allowed him to avoid including significant gaps (the ones present do not run very deep) and to pick scraps with a relatively good quality surface.

2. BPL 1925, booklet 6, fols. 111-20 (excerpts from Gellius, France?, 1150-1200, 10 fols., 118x96 mm).²⁹ Features: discoloration and staining on all folia, substantial translucency (fols. 111 and 120, see Plate 11); gaps of category 3 (fol. 119) and category 4 (fols. 112 and 117); some singletons present.

3. BSB, Clm. 14100, booklet 1, fols. 1-49 (Horace, *Opera*, Italy, 1150-1200, 49 fols., 165x105 mm).³⁰ Features: nearly all folia have a poor surface that includes horny patches, discoloration and pronounced follicle patterns; substantial gaps of category 1 (fols. 1, 2, 4, 48), category 2 (fols. 12, 13, 14, and many other folia in this booklet), and category 3 (fol. 3).

4. BSB, Clm. 14809, booklet 1, fols. 1-17 (Virgil, *Bucolica*, Italy, 1150-1200, 17 fols., 144x75-100 mm).³¹ Features: many leaves with discoloration, pronounced follicle pattern and horny patches; gaps of category 1 (e.g. fols. 5 and 6), category 2 (fols. 2, 17b, and many others); rectangular folium that is short (fol. 13); patching of gap with a second offcut (fol. 15); pebble-removal channel (fol. 17a). The gaps do not run as deep as in other offcut manuscripts, but this probably results from trimming during binding (note that the pricking is mostly cut).

29. Munk Olsen, *L'étude des auteurs classiques latins: Tome II*, 197 and Gumbert, *Illustrated Inventory of Illuminated Manuscripts*, nr. 1515, at 114.

30. Munk Olsen, *L'étude des auteurs classiques latins: Tome I*, 468.

31. Munk Olsen, *L'étude des auteurs classiques latins: Tome II*, 740.

32. Munk Olsen, *L'étude des auteurs classiques latins: Tome I*, 470.

33. Munk Olsen, *L'étude des auteurs classiques latins: Tome II*, 149.

34. Munk Olsen, *L'étude des auteurs classiques latins: Tome I*, 470.

5. BSB, Clm. 14809, booklet 2, fols. 18-47 (Horace, *Carmina* and *De arte poetica epistula ad Pisonem*, Germany, 1150-1200, 30 fols., 144x100 mm).³² Features: substantial number of pages with discoloration, translucency, and horny bits; many pages with significant gaps of category 1 (fols. 27, 29, and 31), category 2 (e.g. fols. 20, 21, 33, 34, and many more) and 3 (fol. 19); rectangular sheets that are short (e.g. fols. 20, 36, and 37); folia from which the gaps have been cut (e.g. fol. 40).

6. BSB, Clm. 14809, booklet 3, fols. 48-64 (Ovid, *De remedio amoris cum glossis*, Germany, 1150-1200, 17 fols., 144x100 mm).³³ Features: many leaves with discoloration, horny patches, and with ink that does not take well; gaps of category 1 (fol. 53), category 2 (fols. 49, 56, 57, 61, and many others); rectangular folium that is short (fol. 56).

7. BSB, Clm. 14809, booklet 6, fols. 91-99 (Horace, *Ars poetriae*, Germany, 1150-1200, 9 fols., 140x90 mm).³⁴ Features: substantial number of pages with discoloration and where ink does not take well; gaps of category 2 (fols. 92 and 93) and category 4 (fol. 91); rectangular sheets that are short (fols. 98 and 99).

While these additional specimens form a modest sample, they do suggest that the offcut manuscript is a category of its own in the transmission of classical literature during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. A preliminary study of their physical features, moreover, points out striking parallels with the Leiden booklet. These go beyond the dimensions of the page and the presence of gaps and surface deficiencies, which merely result from the fact that scraps were used. Other parallels, for example, are the lack of decoration, the low qual-

ity of the script, the significant duct variation shown by the scribes, and the somewhat sloppy execution of the *mise en page*, as shown by a lack of justification on the right side of the text block. In other words, as in the Leiden booklet, a certain lack of care unites the seven items listed above. Moreover, with the exception of Engelberg, SB, 154, which is a full manuscript with 125 folia, the additional offcut manuscripts are all booklets of modest thickness, containing only nine, ten, seventeen, thirty, and forty-nine folia. It appears that when a full classical manuscript was planned, scribes tended to use regular sheets from the prime cut, while with booklets, scribes sometimes resorted to scrap material. The probable explanation for this phenomenon may be one of availability: there may simply not have been enough scraps lying around to make a full manuscript.

The eight offcut manuscripts presented in this essay prompt an important question: why copy classics on scraps, especially considering how much they affected a book's appearance? The most probable answer is that it provided scribes a means to economise. Itemised bills of manuscripts produced commercially suggest that up to twenty per cent of the total cost was taken up by the writing support (this goes for parchment books), so financial savings could be made by replacing regular parchment sheets with scraps.³⁵ After all, such leftover material must have been very cheap when purchased. Such is suggested not only by their material properties, but also by medieval primary sources, such as the thirteenth-century statement that Thomas Aquinas' use of offcuts for the production of his *Summa contra gentiles* reflected his love of poverty.³⁶ Moreover, if a scribe had purchased full skins (i.e. uncut sheets) from the stationer or parchment maker rather than prefabricated sheets or quires, the scraps

35. See, for example, the evidence in Kwakkel, 'Commercial Organisation', 183.

36. As discussed in Kwakkel, 'Discarded Parchment', 245.

37. Burnett, 'Give him the White Cow', 15. See my 'Discarded Parchment', 243-4, for a broader assessment of scraps and note-taking.

38. When I discovered this note in 2013, it was glued against the inside of the board at the back. It has since been removed and is presently stored separately in the manuscript.

39. Kwakkel, 'Discarded Parchment', 242-3 (letters) and 245-6 (drafts).

40. Gorman, 'Claudius of Turin', 316.

were available at no cost, since they were a by-product of the regular sheets produced for other projects.

The urge to economise may not be the full explanation. Inspecting the broader use of offcuts in medieval written culture – that is, beyond the production of manuscripts – reveals another binding feature: they were mostly meant for personal use. While manuscripts in the eleventh and twelfth century were commonly made for institutional use, scrap material had a limited circulation, usually confined to the maker himself. A good example of this is the use of scraps for note-taking, which appears to be one of the most popular applications of the material. *De discipline scholarum*, a Paris guidebook for students and teachers made in the 1230s, suggests that the strips (*cedulae*) were brought to the classroom for taking notes.³⁷ Scholars also used scraps when studying texts, excerpting from them, or summarising their contents, as seen on a thirteenth-century slip that recently emerged in BPL 191 D (Plate 18).³⁸ Not only did the low cost of the material make offcuts supremely suitable for taking notes, so did the nature of the writing itself. Notes were, after all, meant for personal use, and so there was simply no need to use good parchment.

The same sentiment is encountered with two other popular genres for which scraps were used: drafts and letters.³⁹ The practice of using scraps for draft texts dates back to at least the ninth century. In his commentary on Genesis, Claudius of Turin (d. 827) apologizes for the potential mistakes that were included. The mistakes result, he explains, from the fact that he copied excerpts straight from his sources into his own text rather than first 'arrang[ing] them on pieces of parchment' (*schedulae*).⁴⁰ The example shows that Claudius would normally use offcuts as a vehicle for a draft

text, much as Aquinas did in the thirteenth century. Similarly, Peter Damian (d. 1072 or 1073) had a monk write out his dictated draft letters on a parchment scrap for his approval, after which a final copy was produced and ultimately sent out.⁴¹ These examples, too, show how the poor and potentially off-putting appearance of scraps mattered little, since the objects produced from them were not likely to reach a broad audience. That is to say, while letters were explicitly meant for a readership beyond the sender, its circulation in the original form, as a scrap, was limited. Letters that reached a broader audience usually did so in the form of collections of copied out letters, presented in regular parchment manuscripts.⁴²

While the low cost of scraps was probably an important rationale for using them, another key motivation in the copying of classical texts on scraps may potentially be the personal nature of the manuscript's intended use: the object is more likely to have been made for personal consultation by the individuals who produced them than for wide circulation within a community or institution. A strong supporting argument for this is the lack of care that the scribes of the eight manuscripts exhibited during the copying stage, as witnessed in the variable duct, and the lack of proper justification of the text block. Moreover, considering that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries education was the foremost purpose for producing classical manuscripts,⁴³ we may well understand the tiny objects as manuals, *aides mémoire*, used by teachers: the thin and light booklet, made casually and with little financial investment, would have made an ideal hand-held aid in the oral delivery of lectures.

41. Blum, *The Letters of Peter Damian* 1-30, 15-6.

42. For the short lifespan of the original letter, see Constable, *Letters and Letter-Collections*, 18-20.

43. See, for example, Scaglione, 'The Classics in Medieval Education'; Munk Olsen, 'The Production of Classics'; Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, 113-6; Evans, *Old Arts and New Theology*, 19-26; and Reynolds, "Let him read the Satires of Horace".

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