



The Voynich Manuscript: The Complete Edition of the World's Most Mysterious and Esoteric Codex

Stephen Skinner (Foreword) , Rafal T. Prinke (Introduction) , Rene Zandbergen (Introduction)

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The *Voynich Manuscript* is an extensively illustrated codex featuring cosmological and astrological diagrams interwoven with detailed herbal illustration, relating both to the magical and alchemic view of the universe. It is written in a strangely beautiful cryptographic script.

The Voynich Manuscript: The Complete Edition of the World's Most Mysterious and Esoteric Codex Details

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From Reader Review The Voynich Manuscript: The Complete Edition of the World's Most Mysterious and Esoteric Codex for online ebook

Amy says

I received a PDF version of this via NetGalley and it was something I was really looking forward to. First, I had problems getting it to even open. When I finally was able to get into it, I found it to be filled with blurry images. I hope the actual book has better quality but I wouldn't purchase it without knowing for sure. I did find the additional information included by Dr. Skinner to be very interesting and I found it rather frustrating, feeling as though I wasn't able to appreciate the book as it was intended. If you are a fan of cryptology or the occult, I think it would be well worth your time to read it.

Mandy says

A high-quality reproduction of the Voynich Manuscript, that mysterious and still to this day undeciphered 15th or 16th century manuscript that has so fascinated its readers for so long. And I too am now fascinated by it! These new photographs of the original have been beautifully and clearly reproduced so that the book is a joy to "read". I received the e-book version from NetGalley, but it's very much a book I would love to have in hard-copy. The introductory information is informative and very useful, and the whole publication is a delight.

Tina says

A very short introduction with some background history and theories accompanies a full color reproduction of the manuscript.

The manuscript itself is a strange, mysterious volume that feels like both magical fantasy and early science.

Juli Rahel says

I spent the last four years of my life studying medieval English literature so naturally I have a rather unhealthy appetite for and obsession with medieval manuscripts. Usually I tend to keep my eye out for books on Anglo-Saxon manuscripts specifically, but a few years ago I first read about The Voynich Manuscript and the utter mystery it still is, and how was I supposed to resist that? So when I saw Watkins Publishing had a new edition coming out I was thrilled. Thanks to Watkins Publishing and Netgalley for providing me with a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

The Voynich Manuscript is split into, roughly, three sections. The first is a foreword by Dr. Stephen Skinner, where he briefly introduces the make up of the MS and how The Voynich Manuscript came about. The manuscript itself has 5 identified sections: a herbal section, a cosmological section (my favourite), a section showing women bathing (it's not quite as weird as it sounds actually), a pharmaceutical section, and a textual

section.

This is followed by an introduction by Dr. Rafal T. Prinke and Dr. René Zandbergen, who dig more deeply into the Manuscript and its history itself, such as its unique alphabet, its different sections and its provenance. Since this is in my field of interest, I was fascinated to read about the history they attempt to establish for the manuscript, as well as the different studies and claims that have been made about the MS. Often with MSS like these, it is almost more important what definitely isn't true than what is. So that Leonardo da Vinci is not the author is a key finding, in a way. So in the case of The Voynich Manuscript, reading the Foreword and Introduction are a must. Not only are they interesting, they are also important to understanding and appreciating what you're about to see.

After the Foreword and Introduction comes the reproduction of the MS itself. I absolutely loved poring over these pages. Although the illustrations are, by medieval standards, relatively simply and even amateurish, they are still stunning and fascinating. I especially loved the cosmological section (see the image to the right below) with its star rosettas and much more. The section on women bathing was also really interesting and I would love to tell you what conclusion Skinner, Prinke and Zandbergen drew from this, but for that you should truly read The Voynich Manuscript yourself. Of course I also tried my hand at figuring out any of the writing but failed miserably at even the smallest "word". Not that I will give up, I will be pouring over The Voynich Manuscript for a very long time.

The Voynich Manuscript is an 'in between'-kind of book. On the one hand it is clearly academic in nature, a reproduction of an obscure medieval manuscript. On the other hand, Skinner, Prinke and Zandbergen seem to have done their best to make it accessible to every kind of audience. I have read student textbooks more obstinately confusing than The Voynich Book, whose Foreword and Introduction do its best to set up a novice reader with some of the knowledge and background they will need to truly enjoy the MS that follows. Their writing is clear and precise, to the point and not filled with academic jargon. This means that it is not just a special interest book, but is open to the wider public that may have an interest in history or manuscripts. Since Watkins Publishing was kind enough to send me a physical copy of the book I simply have to talk about the layout of the book for a second. The reproduction of the folios are very clear and you can really see detail on the page. Also, at the bottom of each page they show the reader where in the manuscript they are. A folio is one page of parchment, which is then marked either as r for recto (the front) or v for verso (the reverse). As the book reproduces the MS page by page, the different leaves are referred to as f1r, f1v, f2r, f2v, etc. They also show which quire you're on. A quire is four sheets, or bifolios, folded together which makes for 8 pages. The Voynich Manuscript treats its source material with care and clearly put a lot of effort into letting the reader get as close to the manuscript as possible.

I absolutely adore The Voynich Manuscript. It is a beautifully rendered reproduction of one of the most continuously puzzling manuscripts to have come out of Eastern Europe. Skinner, Prinke and Zandbergen treat the manuscript with respect and guide the novice reader into the MS's secrets as well as they can. I'd recommend this to anyone interested in manuscripts and medieval history.

For full review: <http://universeinwords.blogspot.com/2011/07/the-voynich-manuscript.html>

Luci says

I've always wanted to see the whole of the Voynich manuscript collected into one book. I've seen some of the

manuscript on online pictures. But it is always much better to see something so unique collected into one book. The foreword and introduction are really good. I especially like that the introduction is so thorough, but at the same time short enough that it is easy to remember while looking and trying to decipher the manuscript itself.

I was fortunate enough that the publisher let me read an Arc of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Lauren James says

This was so interesting! I'd heard of the Voynich manuscript briefly before, but I had no idea of its history, or how beautiful it was. This is a really high quality scan of the entire codex, including the beautiful illustrations and code. I'm absolutely fascinated, and it's killing me that we might never know what it says.

I'm especially intrigued that it seems to be a botanical guide, but we can't identify what the plants are - which implies that plants have adapted and evolved so much since this was written in the 15th century that the drawings are now unrecognisable. Incredible.

Meghan says

Well, that was a bit of an anti-climax, although I'm not quite sure what I was expecting -- a sudden, complete translation, that I'd look at it and my background in mathematics and cryptography would just reveal everything to me, even though clever mathematicians and cryptographers than myself have tried? I guess, yes, a little. In any case, my copy from Netgalley was fairly pixelated and impossible to make out the individual "letters", so even if I'd been visited by an expected bit of genius, it wouldn't have mattered much. So yeah, I did not crack the code.

There's an intro and historical overview, not going as in depth into the math and statistical analysis as I would have liked. It was interesting, but didn't tell me much more than I already knew. The pictograms on the bottoms of the pages in the actual manuscript, telling you where in each folio each page went, or how it was laid out on the fold-out pages, was helpful. But, in the end, like in my last book review, I wanted this to be a coffee-table book, not a blurry collection of squiggles on my ipad.

The Voynich Manuscript by ? went on sale August 15, 2017.

I received a copy free from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

(I have put that I want to connect with the author on Netgalley, who has yet to set up any seances for me with regards to dead authors.)

Bejaka Phoenix says

I received this book on NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

I actually expected more attempts at offering translations for the codex. Skinner, Prinke and Zandbergen do

offer a brief summarized analysis of the leading theories surrounding the Voynich Manuscript, but they do not delve any further than that. I did like the fact that they included the full manuscript for readers to get a glimpse of this linguistic conundrum however the images are still unclear and one cannot appreciate the writing or attempt to decipher them. If you want a brief introduction as to what the Voynich Manuscript then this book is perfect; however, if you are searching for a deeper analysis to aid you on your quest to decipherment then this is not the book for you.

Theediscerning says

The Voynich Manuscript is one of the world's biggest-known mysteries - a medieval text that remains to this day very hard to understand, however close it sticks to the herbalist books, guides to the stars and almanacs of its day. The coloured artworks of the flowers look alien and incorrect, and the script is something nobody can successfully claim to have deciphered.

I was really happy to at last see the full Manuscript as an ebook, and not a website - although I will have to let you down, I couldn't work it out. Not one jot of it. Certainly the book itself would seem to be in rather poor condition, with chunks out of some pages, and blowing up the script on netgalley didn't make it terribly clear, even if one were ever able to read it. The introduction contains just as much as we know (or don't) about it that the common reader would be interested in, although the reverse chronology of its ownership was perhaps a little too scholarly. and awkward. And while there is a place in the market for an annotated volume, so much of that would be down to the editor's own guesswork, so perhaps the plain representation as seen here is the best option. Certainly my eyes were opened by the multi-page spreads, and I don't think I've ever seen any of the bathing(?) pages before. Seeing it all goes nowhere towards diluting the mystery, so I'd recommend everyone peruse this enigma before it's solved.

Nicki Markus says

Having heard of this manuscript some time ago, I was keen to see it for myself. This edition offers an interesting Foreword by Dr. Skinner and an excellent Introduction by Dr Prinke and Dr Zandbergen. Both of these are vital since they illuminate what is known about the text and, more importantly, what isn't. Without reading these first, you would have no idea what you were looking at when you turn to the manuscript itself. As for the latter, it is obviously unreadable, but it is fascinating to flick through the pages and view the illustrations and text. I recommend this to readers interested in historic documents and those fascinated by cryptography.

I received this book as a free eBook ARC via NetGalley.

Nostalgia Reader says

3 stars for the intro & foreword.

I wanted to read this for the introductory material to the manuscript, as I just wanted a general overview history at the moment, and it this definitely met the criteria! The foreword and introduction, all by scholars who have extensively studied the Voynich Manuscript, provide a succinct breakdown what the manuscript

possibly is, its provenance and decipherment attempts, and prominent highlights of the manuscript's content.

The majority of the book, of course, consists of the photographs/scans of the entire manuscript itself. I did find the quality of these photos to be somewhat blurry; however, I'm not sure if this was due to this being an ARC, my screen resolution, the fact that the manuscript is quite old, or a mixture of the above. I do hope it's clearer in the print edition. This is also something that lends itself almost solely to a print edition, as a digital copy doesn't lend itself very well to casually flipping through it. I did love that each page was accompanied by a small diagram of the quarto that it's a part of. While these diagrams can get a bit confusing when it comes to the fold out pages, I still thought it was a nice touch. I do wish that there would have been annotations throughout--it would have made this a truly indispensable work then.

It's still an excellent introduction to the Voynich Manuscript for anyone interested in learning about the basics.

Thank you to NetGalley for providing me with a free copy to review!

(Cross posted on my blog.)

Marko says

The manuscript itself is fascinating. The foreword is interesting and concise, albeit non-sufficient for the truly curious.

Long story short: circa 15th century; Germanic origin (Austria or northern Italy); later on, it was studied by Jesuit priests and scholars in Prague; bought by a Polish antiquarian Voynich around WWI; the language is not similar to any living language, except maybe for monosyllabic languages of East Asia and no computer specialized for ciphers was able to crack it thus far.

Kaylee says

Not sure how to classify "reading" this as most of it is pictoral but it's on my read shelf anyways. 40 pages of clear introduction/explanation. Not as in depth as I would have liked, seems to presume some level of knowledge on readers part rather than going in blind. Having said that a quick google could clear things up and it does have a wonderful bibliography inclung websites fo further reading.

Points out some areas of interest with page references to enable flipping back and forth (I could not have read as an Ebook and would not recommend it in that format) . Wouls have liked the scanned pages to have annotations and highlights next to them. Would really have appreciated some pointing out on pages of "Key areas". Also could have benefited from possible and supposed ideas on the pages (E.g. it has been suggested that this plant could be a ...)

Book is beautifully bound the cover draws attention the way a coffee table/art book should. Great for a conversation starter.

Some illustrations that leapt out at me or intrigued me-
The little dragon/lizard creature eating the leaf on f.25.v
The unhappy faces on the root system of f.33.r
The four unidentifiable (to me) animals drinking the ladies/mermaids water(?) f.79.v

I am in no way shape or form a Biologist, Cryptographer, English scholar or Astronomer but I found this book to be very thought provoking. The Zodiac pages were the ones that I would most love to be deciphered.

I received this book as a give away but this is my freely given opinion and was in no way effected.
(If I made any spelling, grammatical or terminological mistakes please forgive me I am just a book lover reviewing for fun)

Yzabel Ginsberg says

[I received a copy of this book through NetGalley.]

I discovered the Voynich Manuscript sometime last year, and since then have been intrigued by it, both its text and illustrations.

Most of the book is devoted to scans and photos of the manuscript's pages. In that regard, while I got a PDF copy here, but I definitely recommend a paper one to fully appreciate those since the illustrations in the PDF were a little blurry, perhaps because it was an ARC and not the final, sold version (I'd get such a copy myself if I had enough space to keep physical books). A paper copy also lends itself more easily to going back and forth between photos and the introduction & commentary, at the beginning of the book, and I think being able to do that is a must-have here. Finally, for want of deciphering the Voynich, being able to admire and contemplate its content is part of the pleasure, after all—so, paper all the way. (I do hope it's printed on some nifty glossy paper with a very nice smell; yes, I sniff books, I'm liable not to buy one if it literally stinks.)

Speaking of the introduction, I found it really interesting, regarding the manuscript's history but also the many interpretations, and descriptions of specific illustrations and why exactly they're puzzling (such as the one with women bathing in an intestine-like shape—I learnt something new about what that may represent, and further than that, if it's the right interpretation, what it reveals about the manuscript's author).

The manuscript itself... Fascinating 'gibberish', I wish I had more abilities in deciphering, for I would fail for sure, but at least I might have more of an insight about where to possibly start? It doesn't seem based on a European language, at least not an alphabetic one, and is thought to rely on a syllabic system. Was it an entirely created language?

I do hope someone will one day fully decrypt it. Preferably while I'm still alive to see it.

Conclusion: 4 stars (well, 3 for an ebook version because you can't leaf through as easily, but I'm nitpicking).

Tash says

This is what I get when I pick a book on a whim. It was literally a ~20 page introduction, and then a copy of the entire manuscript. If you're unfamiliar with the manuscript it would probably be a lot more interesting, but I already had seen a lot of the pages. The introduction however was quite good, the exact kind of non fiction writing I like. Maybe it would make a good coffee table book? I don't know.
