

London, Wellcome Library, MS 8004: A Description

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to provide a codicological (dealing with provenance, collation and materials among other aspects) and palaeographical (dealing with marginalia, scripts, numerals, abbreviations, corrections and punctuation system) description of London, Wellcome Library, MS 8004, a fifteenth century manuscript that includes different texts of a number of subjects (astronomy, astrology, history and medicine). Finally, a linguistic description is provided in order to exemplify its period of writing (Middle English period).

Keywords: codicology, palaeography, Middle English, scientific text

Título: London, Wellcome Library, MS 8004: descripción.

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es proporcionar una descripción codicológica (incluyendo aspectos como la procedencia, cotejo y materiales utilizados) y paleográfica (aportando información acerca de la marginalia, escritura, numeración, abreviaciones, correcciones y el sistema de puntuación utilizado) del manuscrito London, Wellcome Library, MS 8004, un códice del siglo XV con distintos textos de diferente temática (astronomía, astrología, historia y medicina). Finalmente, se proporciona una descripción lingüística para ejemplificar su periodo de escritura (conocido como inglés medio).

Palabras clave: Codicología, paleografía, inglés medio, texto científico.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This article⁴ stems from a longer project devoted to the electronic edition of London, Wellcome Library, MS 8004 found in my Master Thesis⁵ and which is to be placed in the context of the research project aiming at the production and enlargement of *The Corpus of Late Middle English Scientific Prose*, a project developed at the University of Málaga (and led by Dr. Calle-Martín) with the collaboration of the universities of Murcia, Oviedo, Jaén and Glasgow. This project (entitled *Corpus electrónico de manuscritos ingleses medievales: textos científicos y técnicos*; reference number FII2011-26492) was funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and followed a series of other national research projects that shared a common and two-fold aim: a) the production of electronic editions of the medieval treatises selected, which are hitherto unedited; b) the compilation of an annotated electronic corpus on the basis of these transcriptions, which can be used for further linguistic research. The results of this project are available online at the project website (<http://hunter.uma.es>).

This particular analysis offers the description of a fifteenth century⁶ manuscript (*London, Wellcome Library, MS 8004*). Only certain folios are analysed in this description, from folio 30v to folio 57v. These folios include a number of different texts, and observing their nature (astronomy, astrology, history and medicine), it can be stated that this codex belonged to a physician of that time.

⁴ This research has been carried out with the support of the research project *Corpus electrónico de manuscritos ingleses medievales: textos científicos y técnicos*, which provided access to the digitised images. This support is gratefully acknowledged. All historical, Wellcome-owned images may be published, broadcast or made available in any medium under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution only licence CC BY 4.0.: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> (Accessed November 2014, 23).

⁵ *Manuscript Description, Edition and Glossary of London, Wellcome Library, MS Wellcome 8004* (Pérez-Guillén, 2014), supervised by Dr. Marqués-Aguado.

⁶ A date stated in the very first folio of the manuscript.

This codex is housed at the Wellcome Library, in London, an institution which offers an online webpage⁷ where different images taken from a number of manuscripts are provided. Fragments of those images, extracted from the manuscript website⁸, are given throughout the whole description to illustrate the different explanations.

The following description can be divided into two different parts. Firstly, the codicological one includes the function of several aspects concerning the manuscript (from the section dealing with its date, authorship and provenance to the one concerning the contents of the manuscript). And secondly the palaeographical description covers different sections: from the one dealing with the marginalia to the one concerning the punctuation system. Finally, a brief description about the language is provided.

Several sources have been consulted in order to provide a proper structure for this analysis. The most important one is *English Literary Hands from Chaucer to Dryden* (1977), where Petti explains both codicological and palaeographical aspects of a medieval manuscript. Then, Marqués-Aguado's PhD *Edition and Philological Study of G.U.L. MS Hunter 513 (ff. 37v-96v)* (2008) and Esteban-Segura's *Glasgow, University Library, MS Hunter 509: A Description* (2011) have also been consulted in order to complement Petti's account. To cover the scripts parts, *Guide to Scripts Used in English Writings up to 1500* (Roberts, 2005) has been used. Another different source has been Cappelli's *Dizionario Di Abbreviature Latini ed Italiani*⁹ (1912), which collects different forms of abbreviations. The *Middle English Dictionary*¹⁰ has been examined several times in order to provide a proper transcription of the text. Finally, *An Introduction to the History of the English Language II: Middle and Modern English* (Conde-Silvestre and Hernández-Campoy, 1998) has been reviewed in order to extract the most important linguistic features present in the text.

The information here provided has been obtained by different means. The most important one has been the observation of the digitised images available on the Wellcome Library website. Then, the Wellcome Library provides a brief introduction¹¹ where a bit of history of the manuscript is offered. Finally, the different measurements here given have been collected by in situ observation¹² of the manuscript.

2. DATE, AUTHORSHIP AND PROVENANCE

As it is stated in the very first folio of the manuscript, the writing process started in 1454 (15th century). The words used are:

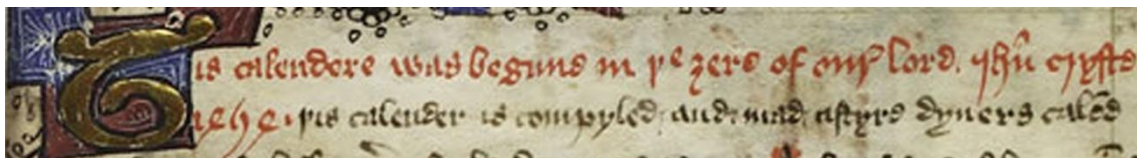


Fig. 1 (f. 4^r, lns. 1-2): Tis calendere was begun in þe zere of our lord. ihesu cryste | 1454 ·¹³

Its writer is unknown, but the signature of a later owner can be observed in one of the flyleaves, a man who lived in the mid 18th century (Fig. 2). According to the Wellcome Library¹⁴ and linguistic evidence, the scribe might have come from the

⁷ <http://wellcomelibrary.org/>.

⁸ <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20120322230853/http://library.wellcome.ac.uk/physicianshandbook/toc1.asp>.

⁹ <http://www.hist.msu.ru/Departments/Medieval/Cappelli/>.

¹⁰ <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>.

¹¹ <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20120322230453/http://library.wellcome.ac.uk/physicianshandbook.html>.

¹² This information has been kindly provided by Dr. Marqués-Aguado.

¹³ This bar (|) is going to be used throughout this whole chapter to reflect the different lines of text in the manuscript.

¹⁴

<http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20120322230453/http://library.wellcome.ac.uk/physicianshandbook.html>.

East Midlands, in particular from Lincolnshire. This codex was included in the library of the Dukes of Newcastle at Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire, but in 1938 the collection was scattered. Finally, the Wellcome Library acquired it in 2002.

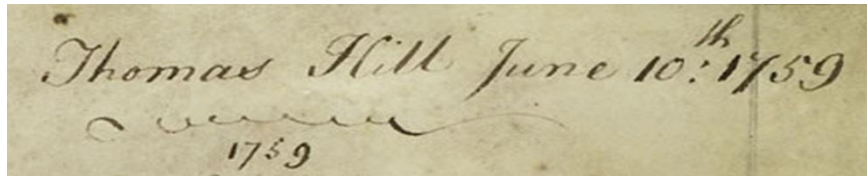


Fig 2 (f. 1^v): Mark of authorship

3. COLLATION, STATE OF CONSERVATION, FLYLEAVES AND MEASUREMENTS

This codex consists of 96 folios: 93 leaves with contents and 3 flyleaves at the front. These flyleaves were used to protect the codex, and according to Johnston: “a book of any size or importance ought to have at least three fly-leaves at the beginning, and three or four at the end” (1977: 77). They seem to have served as draft papers before the writing process of the codex, because some annotations, drawings and calculations can be noticed there.

In general, the manuscript is in really good condition, although some stains, blots and ink shade degradation have erased some words. Besides, there are some torn out pages causing the loss of some drawings and sentences. Finally, the binding measurements are 21,5 x 15,5 x 3,5 and the folios measurements are 20,7 x 14,2.

4. MATERIALS AND ILLUMINATION

The main writing surface is vellum¹⁵, and different ink colours are used for different purposes.

Black ink is used for the whole body of the text, marginal annotations, and some small guide letters that “were written in tiny script for the initials” (De Hamel, 1992: 48), which means that they were employed to remind the scribe that a coloured capital letter had to be drawn there (Fig. 3).

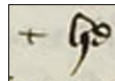


Fig. 3 (f. 36^v, ln. 11): The

Red ink (or rubrication) was used with different functions: to write different heading chapters and to annotate within some tables (ff. 32^v, 33^v, 35^r, and 49^r), to draw line-fillers after a heading chapter, to decorate some capital letters after a punctus (ff. 30^v, 32^v, and 33^r), to highlight important information (f. 31^v), to decorate some drawings (ff. 32^v and 39^r), to make annotations within the margins (ff. 36^v, 46^v, 47, and 48^r) and to make a list of numbers (f. 48^v).

Blue ink is used for two main purposes: to decorate most sentence-initial letters and the different paragraph marks of the MS.

Green ink is used to decorate the first letter of some sentences, the different capital letters that appear in mid-sentence position, and some tables of content.

At the beginning of every single text, the first word right after the heading is very richly decorated with different ink colours creating flowers and plant leaves, covering two different lines. The different colours used are: blue (slightly different from the one used in the sentence-initial letters and paragraph marks), a kind of deep red colour and a brownish one which, according to the Wellcome Library, is gold.

¹⁵ This information has been kindly provided by the staff at the Wellcome Library (by Ms Natalie Walkers, in particular), based on the information found in the auction catalogue of the Christie’s sale which took place in London on Monday 29th November 1999.

5. MARGINS, RULING AND FRAME

Every single page of the manuscript is framed (even the flyleaves), since straight lines can be observed, drawn with black ink, leaving enough space in the margins for possible annotations. No ruling is visible in the body of the text, but some hyphens can be noticed in the margins to indicate in which position lines should have started (*Fig. 4*).

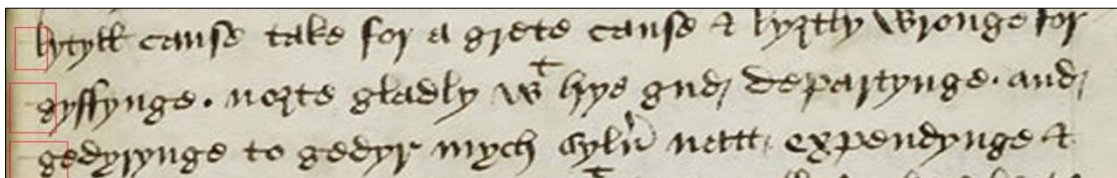


Fig 4 (f. 48^r, lns. 9-11): guiding hyphens

Most of the folios of the MS here analysed have a total number of 26 lines, but some of them have a different number: f. 30^v has a total of 28 lines, f. 31^r 27 lines, f. 32^v 20 lines, f. 33^r 24 lines, f. 33^v 12 lines, f. 35^r 13 lines, and f. 50^v 29 lines.

6. FOLIATION AND QUIRING

There are two different foliation systems within the margins of the MS. One of them would be the signature and is placed at the bottom right margin of every recto folio (*Fig. 5*). McCarren and Moffat (1998: 317) state that:

Two other methods for maintaining the order of the quires were the use of quire and leaf signatures. [...] The former is usually a sequence of numbers at the bottom of the last verso or first recto of the quire, running i, ij, iij, etc. The latter, which are more common after s. xiv, occur on each leaf in the first half of the quire and usually take the form ai, aij, aiij; bi, bij, bijj, etc. Such numeration, where it exists, begins on the second quire, not the first.

Quires, according to Petti (1977: 6), are “the main unit of both parchment and paper, especially in the medieval period. The number of leaves in a quire could vary considerably”. In the case of the manuscript here studied, this system seems to be contemporaneous to the writing process, because the forms of numbers and letters are very similar to the ones used in the body of the text. In some folios they are erased; therefore, the whole system cannot be properly described (*Fig. 5*).

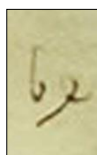


Fig. 5 (f. 53^r): b4

At the top right margin of some recto folios, a more recent system can be noticed, which is used to number the different folios. The different numerals seem to be later to the writing process of the text, but it is difficult to establish their date of writing (*Fig. 6*).

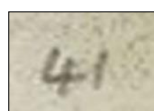


Fig. 6 (f. 41^r): 41

7. CONTENTS

The main subjects of this manuscript are astrology and astronomy, and they seem to have been two extremely important aspects of a physician's daily work at that time. Some other topics are also mentioned, such as medicine and history, the former being also related to the subject of astronomy.

There are several texts within the folios studied for this paper. All the titles of these texts are rubricated; for this reason, it is much easier for the reader to distinguish between the different contents. Some tables are provided throughout the MS to help the reader understand the explanation of the text.

8. MARGINALIA

The marginal notes of the manuscript seem to have been produced in the same period as the writing process of the codex, because the letter and number forms are the same as the ones used in the text. Very few notes can be observed within the MS, but they serve for different uses, the main ones being: to place the decoration of every chapter-initial letter, to draw the flourish of some letters and the different foliation systems, to include some corrections or some numbers to organize the information of the text and, if there was not enough space left in the body of the text, to finish some sentences.

9. SCRIPTS

The hand of the MS is quite steady, cursive and neat in general. Although the main type of script is *littera cursiva Anglicana formata hybrida* as Roberts exemplifies (2005: 219-225), both *Anglicana* and *Secretary* scripts are mixed in the text. As Roberts states (2005: 161-164), it was absolutely normal that both scripts were used interchangeably "due to the fact that both descend from the Gothic system of scripts [...] both tend to intermingle in many texts". Besides, Petti adds (1977: 15): "*Anglicana* [...] assumed some of the angularity of *secretary* during the course of the 15th century [...]. *Secretary* too, borrowed liberally from *Anglicana*, especially in its early phase".

This phenomenon provides different letter forms in a number of cases (Fig. 7), all of them described by Petti (1977: 9-21). Firstly, we may find a double-lobed <a> type from *Anglicana* script (as in 'amonge'), as well as a single-lobed one from *Secretary* (as in 'and'). Secondly, we can notice a slightly prickled case of <e> found both in *Secretary* and *Anglicana* scripts, and another one which seems to have an "eye" from *Secretary* script (both of them occurring at the same time in the word 'qwene'). Then, letter <r> also presents two different forms: the long forked one typical of *Anglicana* (present in 'tryplicite') and the "short, right-shouldered" (Petti, 1977: 11) typical of *Secretary* (as in 'wyrchype'). Letter <s> is the one that presents more variants (three in total): the sigma-shaped one typical of *Anglicana* (present in 'helpers'), the long one that corresponds to both *Anglicana* and *Secretary* (as in 'sall'), and the one that looks like a small B with a final flourish typical of *Secretary* script (as in 'hys'). Finally, letter <w> have two different forms: the first one would be a more ornamental form typical of *Anglicana*, described by Petti (1977: 14) as being "either like a circle enclosing 2 or 3, or, more usually, like two looped l's and 3" (as in 'qwen'), and a simpler one that would correspond to *Secretary* hand, similar to double <v> (as in 'wyrchype').

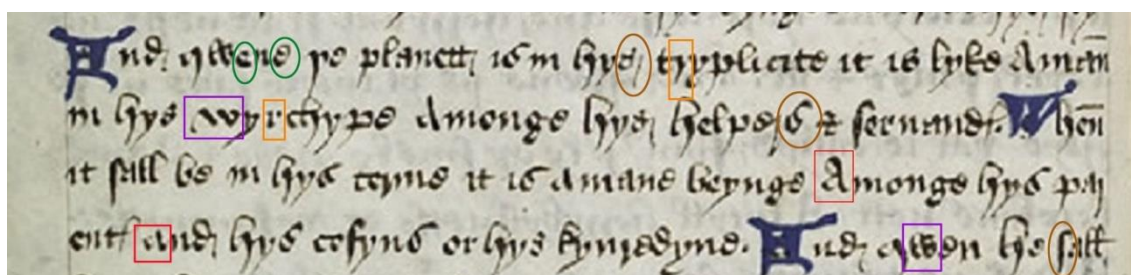


Fig. 7 (f. 31^v, lns. 12-15): Examples of the different letterforms.

10. NUMERALS

As Petti explains (1977: 28), there were basically two forms of numerals in England, which appear in the MS analysed for this piece of research: Arabic and Roman ones, each of them with different functions.

Arabic numerals (Figs. 8-11) seem to be used to indicate quantities, and occasionally dates too. Significantly, some of them have different forms compared to their contemporary ones, and, in general, they are preceded and followed by a punctus in a risen-middle position. The most peculiar ones are described by Petti (1977: 28): number <0>, which looks like letter <o> but with a horizontal crossed bar. Then, number <4> looks like a pair of pincers. Number <5> seems to be an angular <h>, and number <7> is like the top of an isosceles triangle. The peculiarity of number <9> is that it seems to have an open circle instead of the contemporary closed one.

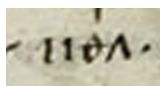


Fig. 8 (f. 41^r, ln. 22): 1107

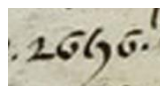


Fig. 9 (f. 41^r, ln. 16): 2656

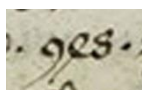


Fig. 10 (f. 41^r, ln. 15): 948

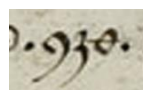


Fig. 11 (f. 41^r, ln. 14): 930

On the other hand, Roman numerals are also used for dates, and their form and system vary from the ones we have nowadays. As Cappelli exemplifies in his *Dizionario di Abbreviature Latini ed Italiani* (1912), thousands were indicated by using <M^l>, and on one occasion <M^o> is used in the manuscript. Then, there were two different ways of indicating hundreds: by using several letters <C> placed together (Fig. 12), or by indicating its number with a group of <i> ending with “i-longa” (Petti, 1977: 28) plus a superscript <C> (Fig. 13). Finally, the last two numbers of the sequence were quite similar to the ones we have nowadays, because <L> was used to express number 50, <X> was used for the tens numbers, and <V> was used to indicate number 5. The rest of the units were indicated with groups of <i> plus a final “i-longa”.

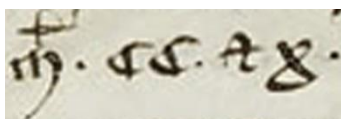


Fig. 12 (f. 42^r, ln. 22): M^l · CC · and X ·

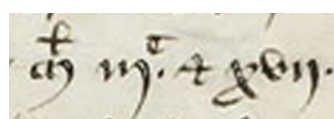


Fig. 13 (f. 42^v, ln. 2): M^l iij^c · and XVij

11. ABBREVIATIONS

According to Petti (1977: 22-25), abbreviations were used by the scribes to save time and to make the maximum use of the expensive materials. On some other occasions, they were simply used to keep lines of the same length when writing.

He provides four categories of abbreviations in English that are present in this manuscript: *contractions*, *curtailment* (or *suspension*), *brevigraphs* (or *special signs*) and *superior* (or *superscript*) *letters*. He also suggests a fifth category (*elision*) which is not going to be discussed in this paper due to its absence.

11.1. Contraction

This consisted in the abbreviation of one or more letters in the middle or end of a word. In this manuscript, the most typical form is a wavy line with or without a point under it, and it generally indicated the omission of a nasal or vowel sound (Figs. 14 and 15). Some examples are:

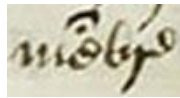


Fig. 14 (f. 53^r, ln. 19): membre

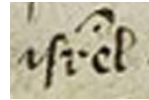


Fig. 15 (f. 40^r, ln. 15): israel

11.2. Curtailment (or suspension)

This consisted in shortening the end of a word with an abbreviation symbol. In this codex, it appears as a tiny curl attached to <r> and it meant that a final <e> was omitted (Fig. 16). Barred double <l> could also be a symbol of curtailment, but sometimes it was merely an ornamental mark particularly used in the 14th and 15th centuries (*otiose stroke*) due to the lack of a standard form at that time (Fig. 17). This phenomenon is always a problem when trying to decide whether they are a mark of abbreviation or an otiose stroke.

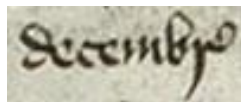


Fig. 16 (f. 34^v, ln. 4): decembre

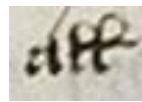


Fig. 17 (f. 34^v, ln. 21): all

11.3. Brevigraphs or special signs

Petti describes them as completely arbitrary symbols standing for two or more letters (1977: 23-24). In this particular text, the followings are the most typical ones.

The sequence of letters –er- is indicated by the use of two different symbols: a curly line placed over the preceding letter (Fig. 18) and a straight bar crossing the stem of letter <p> (Fig. 19).

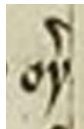


Fig. 18 (f. 32^v, ln. 14): oper

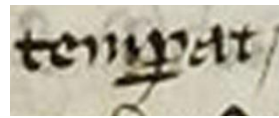


Fig. 19 (f. 34^r, ln. 18): temperat

Plural forms (Fig. 20) are represented with the use of what Esteban-Segura refers as “a flourish after the letter, turning downwards” (2011: 117). Besides, *con-* (Fig. 21) and *-us* (Fig. 22) are symbolized by the same mark, which is very similar to number <9> or letter <q>.

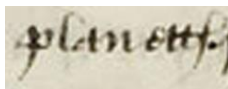


Fig. 20 (f. 46^v, ln. 6): planets

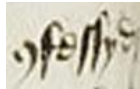


Fig. 21 (f. 45^v, ln. 25): confessy

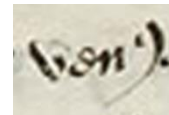


Fig. 22 (f. 49^r, ln 6): venus

Other marks may represent different cases of sequences with a letter <r> in them (Figs. 23 and 24) or the ending of some words (Figs. 25 and 26). Besides, conjunction *and* is indicated by a special sign (Figs. 27).

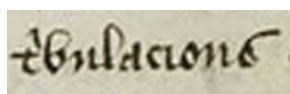


Fig. 23 (f. 40^r, ln. 17): tribulacions

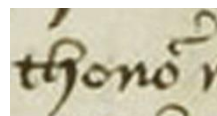


Fig. 24 (f. 37^v, ln. 16): thonour

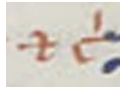


Fig. 25 (f. 49^v, ln. 1): *et cetera*

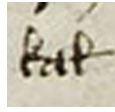


Fig. 26 (40^r, ln. 7): *kalendas*

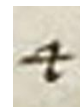


Fig. 27 (f. 33^r, ln. 4): *and*

11.4. Superior or superscript letters

The rising of a letter indicated that the previous one had been omitted (Fig. 28). In some cases, the omitted letters could go beyond the raised letter (Fig. 29). Petti states (1977: 24) that “sometimes the raised letter was there from habit rather than for indicating omission, the most common example being *b^e* for *the*” (Fig. 30).



Fig. 28 (f. 36^r, ln. 9): *pat*

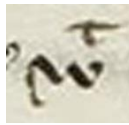


Fig. 29 (f. 34^v, ln. 18): *with*

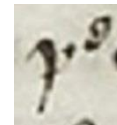


Fig. 30 (f. 32^r, ln. 1): *pe*

12. CORRECTIONS

The manuscript under consideration seems to have been revised by the scribe who wrote it or by another one who would have been called “corrector”. In any case, some mistakes were corrected while some others seem to have been skipped. Petti (1977: 28-32) makes a distinction between different types of error and corrections, the main ones being *deletion*, *alteration* and *insertion*.

12. 1. Deletion

12. 1. 1. Cancellation

This consisted in drawing a line crossing out the wrong word, or in making some kind of mark, so that the reader could notice there was a mistake there. In this particular text, a straight red line (Fig. 31) and a completely crossed out word (Fig. 32) are the two different cases found.

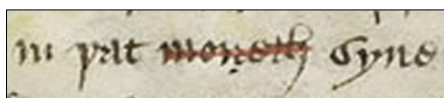


Fig. 31 (f. 40^v, ln. 7): *in pat ~~moneth~~ syne*



Fig. 32 (f. 51^r, ln. 11): *it cum*

12. 1. 2. Expunction

This occurs when some dots can be noticed under the words that need to be omitted (Fig. 33).

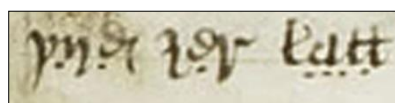


Fig. 33 (f. 51^r, ln. 26): *bird_.zer_.latt*

12.2. Alteration

In this particular manuscript, this was used to change some letters by superimposing or superscribing the correct one.

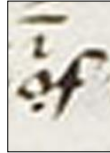


Fig. 34 (f. 52^v, ln. 2): ofⁱ

12.3. Insertions

The skipped letters or words were added later on using a caret (see section 13.4.), so that the reader could notice the addition. Occasionally, this produced a loss of legibility.

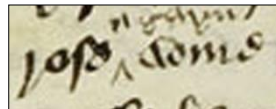


Fig. 35 (f. 43^v, ln. 12): rose ^ agayne some

12.4. Other issues

There are some other mistakes that went unnoticed by the scribe or corrector, which are also mentioned by Petti (1977: 30). At some points, he skipped the repetition of a word or a few words (Fig. 36), there are some words misspelled with some letters omitted (Fig. 37), and sometimes there is a change in the order of the letters (called *transposition* and *metathesis*) (Fig. 38).

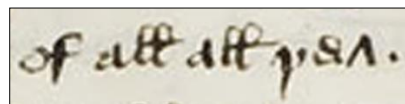


Fig. 36 (f. 47^v, ln. 6): of all all p. 7 · (One "all" should have been omitted)

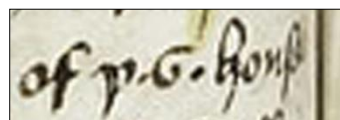


Fig. 37 (f. 52^v, ln. 24): of p. 6 · house ("p" instead of "pe")

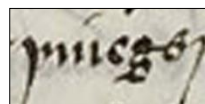


Fig. 38 (f. 34^r, ln. 11): pinegs (instead of "pinges")

13. PUNCTUATION

The punctuation system was not standard during the 15th century. However, it was not entirely chaotic, as Petti himself explains (1977: 25-28). Several marks of punctuation can be observed in this codex.

13.1. Period (or punctus)

This was a point used to separate different sentences, and its height depended on the type of pause intended (Petti, 1977: 25-26). In this text, its main use is in the middle of a sentence indicating a short pause (Fig. 39.2). Most of the times, there is a punctus preceding a coloured capital letter (Fig. 39.1). Finally, although it may be a separate mark of punctuation (it works as a line-filler), the *triangle of dots* or *triple period* (Petti, 1977: 26) is occasionally treated under the heading of period (Fig. 39.3).

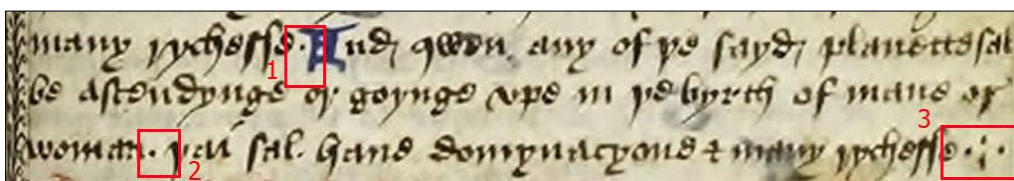


Fig. 39 (f. 31^r, lns 22-24): many rychesse · And qwen any of þe sayd planetts sal | be ascendynge or goynge vpe in þe byrth of mane or | woman · þai sal haue domynacyone and many rychesse ∴

The punctus also encloses numerals. On very few occasions, the height of the punctus is not very clear (Fig. 40); therefore, they seem to appear in a low position as in this case:

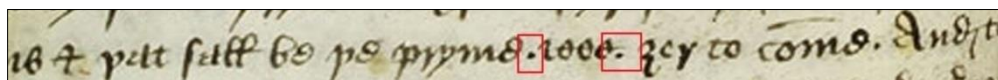


Fig. 40 (f. 48^v, ln. 24): is and þat sall be þe pryme . 1000 . 3er to come . And to

13.2. Hyphen

This mark of punctuation indicated that a word had been split in two different lines, and that it continued in the following line (Petti, 1977: 26-27). In this codex, there seems to be an oblique line drawn in the margins (Fig. 41), which appears sporadically (most of the times, there is nothing to indicate that split).

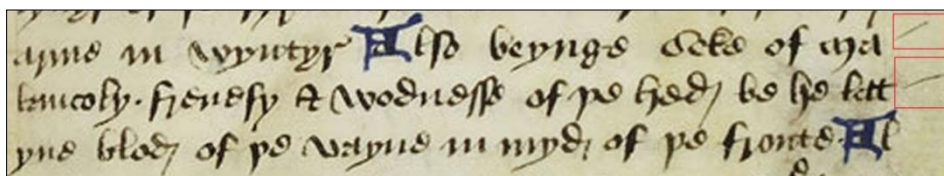


Fig. 41 (f. 45^r, lns 16-18): arme in wyntyre Also beynges seke of Ma- | lancoly · frenesy and wodnesse of þe hed be he lat- | yne blod of þe vayne in myd of þe fronte · Al

13.3. Paragraph mark

The function of this mark of punctuation, according to Petti (1977: 27), was not very clear. Sometimes, it was used to indicate the place where a new paragraph would start, but it could also denote the beginning of a new heading, chapter or book. In general, its form is like a capital T (Fig. 42).

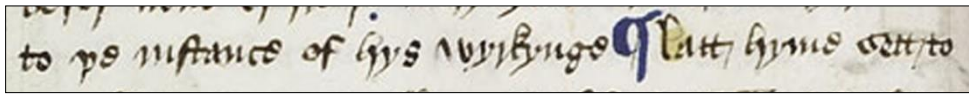


Fig. 42 (f. 52^v, ln. 6): to þe instance of hys wyrkynges ¶ Latt hym sett to

What seems to be a square bracket appears at some points in the text (Fig. 43). It is quite remarkable to notice that no paragraph mark appears in those pages where this symbol is present; therefore, this mark seems to indicate that a paragraph mark should have been drawn there after the revision process of the text (a revision which may not have been carried out due to the presence of many uncorrected mistakes).

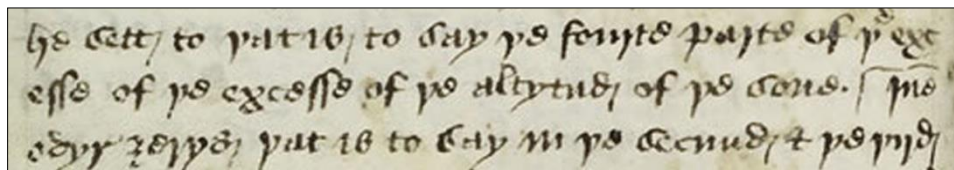


Fig. 43 (f. 51^v, lns. 13-15): he sett to þat is to say þe fourte parte of þe exc | esse of þe excesse of þe altytud of þe sone · | mo | odyr 3erþe; þat is to say in þe secund and þe þird

13.4. Caret

As it has been explained in the corrections section (see section 12.3.), carets were pointing arches used to insert missing words the scribe might have skipped (Fig. 35).

13.5. Diacritic marks

These were short oblique lines placed over letter <i> to distinguish it from any other minim¹⁶. There are some diacritic marks within this codex, but very frequently they appear a bit separated from the <i> they were pointing (Fig. 44).

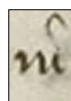


Fig. 44 (f. 35^v, ln. 18): in

13.6. Line-filler

They appear at the end of some of the titles to fill the rest of the empty space, so that no illegal annotations were added later on (Petti, 1977: 28). At the same time, they provided a perfect alignment to the rest of the page (Fig. 45).

¹⁶ According to Petti (1977: 30): “the minims are liable to be confused, thus involving not only *i/j*, *m*, *n* and *u* at the very least, but many other linear letters also according to the script, and components of supralinear and infralinear letters” (e.g. the second limb of *h*).

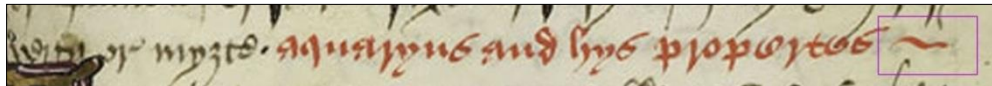


Fig. 45 (f. 36r, ln. 19): wity or myzte · Aquaryus and hys properties ~

13. 7. Inverted semicolon

This peculiar mark of punctuation appears just once in the manuscript (Fig. 46), and it seems to be a comma above a punctus, with the form of a cursive S (transcribed using the symbol ☐). Petti states that its main function was “a lighter pause than a full stop, and ranged in emphasis from the comma to the semicolon in present usage” (1977: 26).

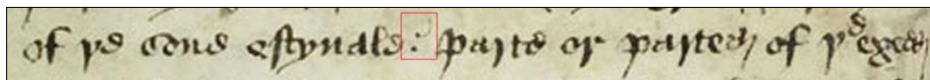


Fig. 46 (f. 51^v, ln. 19): of þe some estyuale ☐ parte or partes of þe exces

14. LANGUAGE

As Mossé states (1979: 1): “it is conventional to call ‘Middle English’ the English spoken and written in Great Britain between about 1150 and 1500, that is, during the period intermediate between Old English and Modern English”. This particular text corresponds to the period known as Late Middle English, because it belongs to the second half of the medieval period (something that can be noticed thanks to the linguistic evidence). The main linguistic aspects of this text are going to be described below following the explanations of Conde-Silvestre and Hernández-Campoy (1998: 1-109).

Although very occasionally, Latin words and sentences are also used in the manuscript (Fig. 47):

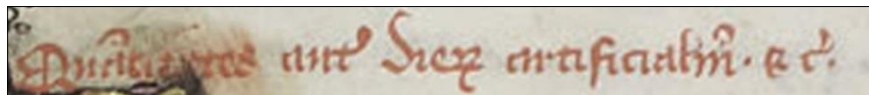


Fig. 47 (49^v, ln. 1): Quantites auter sienum artificialium et cetera

14.1. Spelling

The Old English grapheme <ð> is completely lost in this text, while thorns (<þ>) are frequently repeated throughout the whole text. According to Benskin (1982: 26), <þ> could have been used instead of <th> as a type of abbreviation (particularly recurrent in the article), to save time, space and ink. Therefore, <þe> or <þat> can be found instead of <the> or <that> most of the times.

Apart from that, another Old English grapheme, yogh <ȝ>, can still be found in a number of words, as in “ȝer” (f. 34^r, ln. 7) or “lyȝtly” (f. 39^v, ln. 16).

As Pyles states (1964: 142), the spelling of Middle English was much more relaxed than nowadays. A consequence of this is, for instance, the interchangeable use of <v> and <u>: the first one is used in initial position for both /u/ and /v/, and the second one in middle position for the same phonemes. Some examples are: “vayne” (f. 44^v, ln. 13), “plurysy” (f. 44^v, ln. 24), “Sauoy” (f. 43^r, ln. 19) and “vnto” (f. 42^r, ln. 7).

14.2. Morphology

Conde-Silvestre and Hernández-Campoy (1998: 57-81) commented some main points concerning this domain. In this section, some dialectal issues (articles and determiners; declensional and conjugational endings; pronouns) are described due to their presence. Unfortunately, only a brief description is provided, because this is not the main goal of this article.

There was a significant reduction in the number of articles and determiners from Old English, with the exclusion of particular forms for the plural or the feminine. For this reason, we may only find forms such as <þe> and <þat> instead of all the different declined forms that existed some centuries before.

Another different consequence of this lack of a standard form or the relaxation of the spelling is the sporadic presence of a final declensional –e in some nouns and adjectives (although this phenomenon is even rarer in these last ones). As a result, we may find the same word written with and without that suffix, as in “medcyn” (f. 41^r, ln. 7) and “medcyne” (f. 54^r, ln. 26).

Besides, new forms for the different personal pronouns were introduced in the language at this time, and some of them are present in the text: “þu” for the second person singular, “sche” for the third person singular feminine, or “þai” and “they” for the third person plural.

Analysing the present simple verb forms, the third person presents two different forms: southern final <-th> as in “betokyneth” (f. 31^r, ln. 8), and northern final <-s> as in “says” (f. 46^v, ln. 17). Furthermore, present participles can be found with two different endings too: <-nd> as in “festynd” (f. 35^v, ln. 11) and <-ynge> as in “enterynge” (f. 30^v, ln. 11). This occurs because this text was written in the Midlands, a place where many different features from the north and the south are taken at the same time.

14.3. Syntax

One of the most important processes that occurred in Middle English was the change from a synthetic system into an analytic one, which Conde-Silvestre and Hernández-Campoy explained (1998: 87):

“The leveling of all OE unstressed vowels to /-ə/ and their eventual loss lead to a systematic reduction of OE noun declensions, whose effect is that the language cannot simply rely on case endings (synthetic means) to mark the functions of words in the sentence but needs to take account of analytic means, like prepositions and a relatively fixed SVO word order”.

This means that most of the Old English declensions were transformed into a final <-e>, and gradually this tended to disappear too. This produced a change in the word order of the different elements, so that the final structure became much more fixed than some centuries earlier: subject, verb and complements.

But, still, a declensional ending can be found only in the genitive case. This genitive declension shows the typical northern ending <-ys> (Mossé, 1979: 23), which is combined with the use of preposition “of”. As a consequence, a fixed structure can be found there with a final declensional ending, as in “in þe hyndyr parte of a manys hed” (f. 44^v, ln. 17).

15. CONCLUSION

The examination of the codex confirms that it is a mid 15th century manuscript of which not much is known.

It seems to be the prototypical codex of that period of time, because different general manuscript features stated by many different authors can be found: the use of different foliation systems, the use of two different scripts (very typical at that moment), as well as the abbreviation systems, the types of corrections and the marks of punctuation used.

Besides, it seems to be a good quality codex, because of the illumination employed (with the use of many different colours for different purposes, and the presence of gold) and the use of some flyleaves at the beginning for its protection (although in the digital images none can be found at the end). Finally, the frame is also important in order to delimit the writing area and provide an empty space for possible marginal annotations.

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