

1. Introduction

The study of mediaeval medical literature written in the vernacular has received a good deal of attention for the insights that it can provide into the development of language, literacy or reading practices, among many other aspects (see Taavitsainen and Pahta 2004);¹ relevant and different types of information, such as function or ownership of the books, can also be retrieved by analysing external or purely material features of manuscripts, which at the same time may also have textual significance. It is the purpose of this article to focus on the physical characteristics of a mediaeval book and to describe it from a codicological/palaeographical standpoint, complementing these data with an analysis of other elements, such as sources or dialectal ascription, so as to supply a fuller and more complete picture. The manuscript selected is G.U.L. MS Hunter 509 (hereafter *H509*), which contains a medical compendium consisting of several treatises. *H509* forms part of the Hunterian Collection, housed in the Special Collections Department at Glasgow University Library. The *ex libris* or bookplate is on the inside front cover where, below a picture which represents the reading room of a library, the following can be read: “Drawn in England by J. Scott”, and below this in capital letters: “Bibliotheca Hunteriana | Glasguensis”.² In a new line, the press-mark Q.8.16 has been crossed out with blue pencil; next to it and written with the same colour, the present one, V.8.12, is found.³

2. Contents

The manuscript under consideration holds the text *System of Physic* (ff. 1r-167v),⁴ beginning on the first line of the first folio recto with the words: “[Space left for initial I] Tis to vndyr stonde · þæt · a · man · is mad of iiiij...”, and ending in line 24 of folio 167 verso with: “oþer wāb þe whīp· þe white/ of an ey ∴ laus creatoris amen”. This text is composed of several treatises.

The first part of *System of Physic* comprises a treatise on the four humours and their properties, elements, qualities, complexions, ages of man, seasons of the year, types of wind and division of hours between day and night (ff. 1r-3v). This is followed by an

¹ Scholars have benefited from a number of research tools currently available, such as the electronic catalogue of early English scientific and medical writings known as *eVK2*, which represents an expanded and revised version of Voigts and Kurtz’s reference work (2000), or the bibliographical index of mediaeval Latin scientific writings *eTK*, a digital resource based on Thorndike and Kibre’s catalogue (1963). Both of them can be consulted at <<http://cctr1.umkc.edu/cgi-bin/search>>.

² The mark ‘|’ indicates a change of line.

³ I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (grant number FFI2008-02336/FILO) and of the Autonomous Government of Andalusia (grant number P07-HUM-02609) for research funding. I would like to thank the Special Collections Department at Glasgow University Library for granting permission to work with MS Hunter 509. Similarly, grateful acknowledgement is made to the Keeper of Special Collections for kindly allowing the reproduction of images of the manuscript (their copyright resides with the University of Glasgow). Thanks are also due to the anonymous reviewers who have contributed to the revision of the article and to the Editor.

⁴ Reference is made to the original foliation of the manuscript.

exposition of uroscopy and a further explanation of humours and complexions (ff. 3v-14r). The medical knowledge presented in those folios is grounded in the Greek tradition where diet, climate, place, physical condition, mode of life and age were all relevant (Calman 2007: 32). Some of the previous points are illustrated in the following passage:⁵

Fleume is wont to wexe plentiful in fleumatik folk *and* in old folk duellyng in colde cuntrees, namely in wyntres tyme in vsyng coold *and* moist dietyngis of þe kynde of sicnesse. (f. 5r)

The contents of folios 14r-167v are based on the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus, an adaptation in Middle English from the original Latin work *Compendium medicinae*, written by Gilbertus Anglicus ca. 1240. As its title suggests, this compendium of medical practice provides an extensive description of disorders of the human body ordered following the usual method of the time, which is a *de capite ad pedem* structure (from head to foot). The nature and symptoms of each disease, the humours that cause the disorder and its cures, including advice on nutrition, pills, powders, ointments, plasters and therapies, such as baths and inhalations, are carefully explained. The first ailment tackled is the headache (ff. 14r-16v), followed by other mental and neurological disorders of the head and brain (ff. 16v-28v): 'scotomye' (dizziness and dimness of sight, ff. 17r-17vbis), frenzy (ff. 17vbis-19r), mania (ff. 19r-20r), lethargy (ff. 20v-22v), epilepsy (ff. 22v-25v) and apoplexy (ff. 25v-28v). The exposition continues with sicknesses and afflictions of the eyes (ff. 28v-44v), including the eyelids (ff. 43v-44v), the ears (ff. 44v-52v), the nose (ff. 52v-57r), the mouth (ff. 57r-59v), the teeth (ff. 59v-62v) and the throat (ff. 62v-69v). The discussion proceeds with the chest and lungs (69v-88v), the heart (ff. 88v-95r), the stomach (ff. 95r-115r), the intestines (ff. 115r-29v), the anus (ff. 129v-31r), the liver (ff. 131r-39r), the spleen (ff. 139v-46v), the kidneys (ff. 146v-51v) and the bladder (ff. 152r-58r). Lastly, disorders affecting the peritoneum (ff. 158r-61r), the penis (ff. 161r-64v) and, once again, the anus (ff. 164v-67v) close the treatise. There are more than fifteen extant manuscripts containing the Middle English Gilbertus (some of them fragmentary) (Keiser 1998: 3834), but more witnesses may be discovered with the passing of time (Getz 1991: lxx).

The source of the first part of *H509* (ff. 1r-14r), however, is unknown. Some other versions of the Gilbertus share it, but not all of them, and works other than the Gilbertus may also contain this text.⁶ Teresa Tavormina⁷ has suggested the hypothesis that the original manuscript might have contained a note at the beginning for possible copyists, urging them to include there the information on humours, uroscopy, etc. that they considered suitable as a way of introduction. This could explain why some versions have this material whereas others do not. Another idea of Professor Tavormina's concerns the authorship of this part and the possibility of its author being the same one that translated the Gilbertus from Latin. She notes that the arrangement of the explanations of urine follows the same framework as that of the Gilbertus' treatise (from the head downwards). This is interesting as the descriptions of urine were normally done on the basis of its colour as observed in the flask.

The tone and language employed in this introductory part suggest a didactic or teaching use of the text. The language is clear and comparisons are frequent so that the

⁵ The fragments cited from *H509* throughout this article have been taken from Esteban-Segura (2008a).

⁶ In the manuscript, there is no differentiation in terms of internal structure or articulation between the different parts described.

⁷ Personal communication, 2007.

information is easily understood. An instance of this from *H509* occurs in the discussion of the characteristics of the choleric body:

Colre is hoot *and* driȝe, ryt as we se ofte-tyme a moist þynge dryyt þat is j-leyd to þe feyr þorw þe hotnesse *and* drynesse of þe feyr. And þat see be an exaumpyl: Tac þe rynd of a grene tre *and* ley jt to þe fyer. And þe lenger þat þe rynd liþ to þe fyere, þe more it dryeþ. And þe more it driēþ, þe more it wryncliþ] *and* schrynckeþ. (f. 1v)

At the end of the manuscript, there are several medical recipes for migraine in a different hand (ff. 168v-69r), an added note (f. 171r), and mixed recipes and annotations in various hands (f. 171v).

Before the first folio, there is a loose sheet of note-paper in which Dr William Hunter (see next section) has written: “This M. S. (A System of Physic,) | seems to be written in the oldest | english that is now intelligible, | many of the Saxon characters | being used in it | It begins thus | <Tis> This to undyrstonde that a man | is mad of iiij elements. and every | man hath iiij humors lyke to the | iiij elements. These be the iiij | elements ffyer Eyr Watyr and | Erthe. Every body leving hath | sumwat of them but not | every body alyche The first element | is ffyer and that etc. | It ends with | Sekenesse in the Ers. | Of this I have another copy more complete”.⁸ There is no table or index of contents; a title is also lacking inside the manuscript, however Dr Hunter refers to it as a *System of Physic*⁹ on the fly-leaf.

3. Date and provenance

The text was copied during the second half of the fifteenth century, ca. 1460. Young and Aitken date the manuscript in the fourteenth century (1908: 416), whereas Doyle notes that it was composed in an early-mid fifteenth-century hand (1954, in Young and Aitken 1908).¹⁰ Internal evidence, such as the type of script employed (see section 13), language, and history features, points to a later date than that indicated by Young and Aitken, and Doyle.

Although the contents of a large part of the text have been identified as the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus, the author of the Middle English version remains unknown. Concerning the identity of the copyist and owners, the names appearing on certain folios of the manuscript have proved invaluable in tracing the history and provenance of the book.¹¹ On folio 169r, there is an annotation by a man named Robert Beverley, claiming to have written the book: “J Robart beuerley haþe wretten alle þis bocke” (figure 1). Although Doyle may be right in considering this claim “patently untrue” (in Young and

⁸ The copy to which Dr Hunter refers is G.U.L. MS Hunter 307, also in the Hunterian Collection. This manuscript holds the text *System of Physic* in folios 1r-166v; it is more complete because it also contains an anonymous Middle English treatise on buboes (ff. 145v-46v), a gynaecological and obstetrical text (ff. 149v-65v), a Middle English version of Guy de Chauliac’s ‘On bloodletting’ (ff. 165v-66v) and a pharmacopoeia (ff. 167r-72v) (Reference is made to the original foliation of the manuscript).

⁹ Young and Aitken (1908: 416) and Cross (2004: 34) also use this denomination in their catalogues.

¹⁰ Addendum to page 416.

¹¹ Some of the information on the provenance of *H509* has appeared in Esteban-Segura (2008b, 2010).

Aitken 1908)¹² since the annotation is in a later hand, the presence of that name at the end of the manuscript is significant and could indicate, if not its copyist, an owner of the book; another note containing the same name—and which also suggests scribal activity—can be found on folio 171v: “Amen *quod* Robart beuerley” (figure 2).

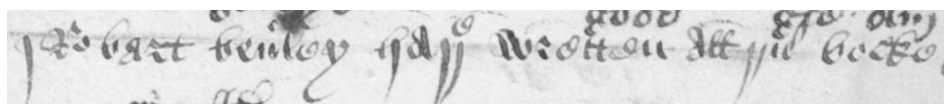


Fig. 1: Mark of authorship (1)

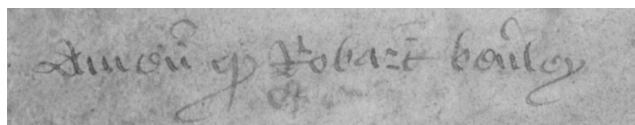


Fig. 2: Mark of authorship (2)

The name in question could make reference to at least three people. The first possibility is that of a surgeon who worked in London and was dead by 1525. He was one of eleven members of his craft exempted from serving on juries, inquests and watches in the City of London in 1517 (Talbot and Hammond 1965: 292). In his register of the University of Cambridge, Emden (1963: 60) lists another Robert Beverley (also recorded in Venn and Venn 1922: 147), a pensioner at Gonville Hall in 1497 who paid the *communa* towards proceeding to a Master of Arts or to another high degree in 1497-98. Emden establishes the likelihood of him being the same person as Robt. B., a Canon and Prebendary of St Mary’s in Warwick who died in 1504. There is still another Robert Beverley from Cambridge, a friar who was a Bachelor of Divinity or Theology in 1506-07, and perhaps a Doctor of Divinity or Theology in 1511-12 (Venn and Venn 1922: 147).

Another note, the mark of ownership “*liber magistri Johannis Sperhawk*”, on folio 171v (figure 3) throws some light on the history of the book and hints at a more reliable copyist. John Sperhawke’s life is discussed in Minns (1949); however, the information contained therein is misleading as he is confused with John Sperhauke, a Bachelor of both Canon and Civil Law, and details of the life of both men are intermingled throughout the article and ascribed to the Sperhawke under discussion.

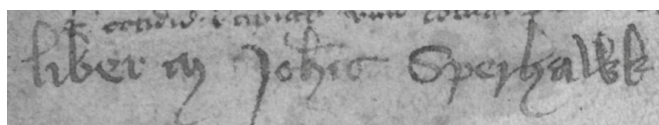


Fig. 3: Mark of ownership (1)

¹² Addendum to page 416. The identification of Robert Beverley as the scribe of *H509* has also been branded as spurious by Gillespie (2001: 591).

The Sperhawke that wrote the note above was probably born around 1404 and studied in Pembroke Hall (later Pembroke College), Cambridge. He was admitted to Pembroke ca. 1426. The date during which he stayed on as a Fellow is unknown, but he was still there in 1433. He graduated as Master of Arts and by 1453 was Doctor of Divinity or Theology. He was ordained priest in September 1425. Sperhawke was Rector of Biddenham, Bedfordshire, a position which he vacated in May 1453. He then became Vicar of Hitchin, Hertfordshire, from May 1453 until his death. He was also Canon of Wells and Prebendary of Ashill, from December 1453 until his death, and Rector of Abington Pigotts in South West Cambridgeshire, which he resigned in 1473. He died in 1474 and was buried at Hitchin. His will is dated 25 March 1472 and was proven on 4 February 1474.¹³

A shortened, and not very reliable, translation of the will is printed in the *Somerset Record Society* xvi (Weaver 1901: 222-25). In it, he bequeathed to Pembroke Hall money for distribution among the Fellows; to the College Treasury his texts of Aristotle's *Ethics and Politics*, and several books to the College Library and to the University Library.¹⁴ He may have owned more books since not all the books of a testator were likely to be enumerated in the will; moreover, they could be faultily described and thus not identified, since listing all the works held in a particular volume exceeded the function of wills (Harris 1989: 163-64). Of the five known books that Sperhawke owned, four are in the College Library in Cambridge while the other, *H509*, is in Glasgow University Library, as mentioned in the Introduction. In his will, he bequeathed to Master Thomas Westhaugh of Syon "the book of medicine that he [Westhaugh] wrote with his own hand" (Weaver 1901: 222-25). These are enlightening words in order to establish who copied *H509*.

Thomas Westhaugh, also a Fellow of Pembroke College, was admitted in 1436 and was still there in 1445-46 (he held the position of Treasurer from 1443 to 1445). By 1437, he had obtained the degree of Master of Arts; that of Bachelor of Divinity or Theology by 1448, and was later Doctor of Divinity or Theology. He received ordination by the Bishop of Norwich in 1437 and was designated Rector of All-Hallows-the-Great in London (1448-59). He joined the Bridgettine Order and by 1472 was Confessor General of Syon Monastery, a house of Bridgettine nuns founded by Henry V in 1415 near the royal palace at Richmond, ten miles west of London, and reputed to be the last great monastery set up in England. He left the place in 1497.¹⁵

There is yet another indication in Sperhawke's hand on folio 171v "<Sperhawkes> Semper Secundum post obitum Magistri · thome | westaw · si // <super>viuat" (figure 4), which bears witness to the fact that the book belonged to Sperhawke and that, after his death, he wanted Master Thomas Westhaugh to have it in case he outlived him.

It is very likely that Sperhawke and Westhaugh were friends and that Westhaugh copied the book for the former, who was very careful to return the book (ensuring this both in his will and in the manuscript) to Westhaugh. It seems that the latter got the book and gave it to Syon Monastery. In the surviving catalogue of the library of the Brethren, prepared and revised in part by Thomas Betson at the beginning of the sixteenth century,¹⁶

¹³ Information about the life of John Sperhawke has been obtained from Minns (1949), Emden (1963: 545), and Venn and Venn (1927: 126).

¹⁴ These books are listed in Emden (1963: 545).

¹⁵ The biography of Thomas Westhaugh is discussed in Emden (1963: 630), Venn and Venn (1927: 371), as well as in the entry found in Gillespie's edition of the library catalogue of Syon (2001: 590-91).

¹⁶ Thomas Betson was deacon and *custos librarie* at Syon, whose *registrum* "is one of the largest library catalogues surviving from pre-Reformation England" (Gillespie 2001: xxix).

the name of Thomas Westhaugh, although still perceptible, has been erased as the donor of the volume. This erasure “probably reflects uncertainty or scruple as to who was the actual donor to the house, and suggests that the chain of benefaction and transmission by which books reached the library was not always transparent” (Gillespie 2001: 590-91). There are a dozen books left to Pembroke College by Westhaugh, including a Virgil and the Latin Gilbertus Anglicus, marked as Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 228, although most of his books he left to Syon (see Emden 1963: 630-31). In the library *registrum*, *H509* is given a full entry as SS1.117 (originally press-marked B.40) (Gillespie 2001: 42). Unfortunately, the subsequent life of the manuscript there is not properly recorded.

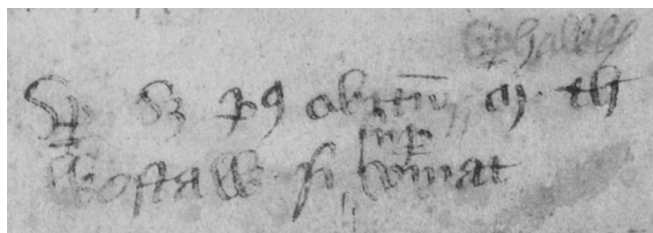


Fig. 4: Mark of ownership (2)

Later at some point, *H509* came into the hands of the Robert Beverley discussed above. Several hypotheses are possible. First, the dissolution of the Monastery in 1539 could have implied the dispersion of its library, and hence new and successive owners. A second possibility is that Robert Beverley could have used the book and made his annotations on it at Syon Library.

On folio 171v, there is also a recipe followed by the name D. W. Watman¹⁷ and another by I. (or J.) Stamford. There is a man called John Stamford, who graduated as Bachelor of Arts from Cambridge University in 1585-86 (Venn and Venn 1927: 144).

The last owner of *H509* was William Hunter (1718-83), a Scottish doctor, educator and medical writer. He was an eminent surgeon and considered the leading obstetrician of his day (Ricci 1930: 53). He left by his will his private collection and the contents of his museum (which he had accumulated over many years in Great Windmill Street, London) to the University of Glasgow “for the improvement of students and the use of the public” (Brock 1990: iii). Dr Hunter had approximately 32 medical manuscripts, of which some 24 were British in origin and provenance. He bought most of the mediaeval manuscripts at auctions or from booksellers. *H509* was acquired from an auction catalogue at the Joseph Letherland sale (Letherland was also a physician-collector) in London, on 14 March 1765; the acquisition was in lots (*H509* was lot 1133) and it included other medical manuscripts, such as lot 510 (MS 362) (Ker 1983: 5-13).

4. Binding

The binding is from the eighteenth century and consists of leather covers of a crimson colour which have faded to brown. It is of Russian calf (John Ashman 1988, in Young and

¹⁷ I have been unable to trace any material relating to this name.

Aitken 1908).¹⁸ The front and back covers present gilt-tooled edges and sides, and gilt embellishments in each corner. The volume measures 183 mm x 131 mm. On the spine (45 mm) “A SYSTEM | OF | MEDEC[I]NE” and, a little further down, “M.S.” can be read.

5. Material

H509 is a codex in parchment of quite good quality. It can be considered a well-preserved manuscript as the volume does not present damage caused by dampness, fire or rodents. However, folio 1r is badly stained and some stains are found throughout the book. On several folios, such as folios 1, 13, 14, 26, 93, there are holes but they can be attributed to the processing of the material, since the scribe avoids them when writing (and therefore they have not appeared later, but were already present). There is evidence of cropping on the sides (f. 130) and at the bottom of folios (f. 164).

It is difficult to distinguish hair from flesh sides as the material is scraped very finely; however, the pages seem to be arranged in a way that hair faces hair and flesh faces flesh (Jones 2000: 209).

For writing, the quill is employed as well as black ink, although the passing of time has discoloured it; as a result, it displays a brownish tint in its current state. Folios 60v-62r and 148v-49r show decorations and paragraph marks in red ink.

6. Dimensions and structure

The size of folios is 175 mm x 130 mm and that corresponding to the area of written space is around 120-25 mm x 90-95 mm (approximately 135 mm x 90-95 mm if heading titles at the top of folios are included). There are small variations in leaf size of up to 1 mm vertically and 4 mm horizontally.

As for the format, letter size is even, although sometimes ascenders and descenders are larger than usual. This takes place when a new section starts and emphasis is wished to be conveyed. The text, written in a single column, shows good handwriting. The number of lines per folio is not uniform, varying from 22 up to 32 lines.

Since there is no table of contents, the main device for finding information are the headings titles with the name of the illness or the organ affected by it. They are placed above the text and are found from folio 14r onwards. Marginalia can also serve this purpose, directing the reader to specific matters (see section 18). The original plan was to mark internal textual divisions by means of two-line opening initials at the start of new sections, but this has not been carried out (see section 16).

7. Foliation

The manuscript consists of 176 folios (352 pages), numbered at the top, on the right-hand side of each recto. Arabic numerals are employed for the numeration of folios; elsewhere, Roman numerals are used. This could imply that foliation was done at a later stage. According to Petti (1977: 28), Roman numerals were predominant in England until the

¹⁸ Addendum to page 416.

sixteenth century. In *H509*, the last in a group of ones is written *j* as, for instance, *ij* (two), *ijj* (three) or *iiij* (four). Young and Aitken (1908: 416) date the foliation in the fifteenth century.

Foliation is erroneous as it starts twice, renumbering folio 3 as 1, and going on thereafter to the end, with the following errors: folio 17 has been numbered twice, a folio has been omitted between folios 127 and 128, and folio 162 has been doubled.

8. Secundo folio

The first words on the second folio (folio recto) of manuscripts were the method used in mediaeval libraries to catalogue them. These words are *and of coldnesse* in *H509*.

9. Prickings

Prickings entail the piercing of a series of holes on leaves to assist the ruling of lines. Signs of pricking are evident on some folios (ff. 32-33). The fact that prick marks appear in the outer margins indicates that the sheets were probably laid flat, then pricked and, finally, folded.

10. Ruling

Folios of manuscripts were usually ruled in order to aid the scribe to keep a regular line of writing, but this is not the case in *H509*, in which folios are not ruled. However, they have a frame margined with brown crayon in order to delimit the space for writing. Sometimes the scribe writes words on top of this, as is the case on folio 6. There are marks of pins on folios 43-53 and 90-100. These marks are probably there as a result of preparing the sheets for binding.

11. Quiring

The manuscript breaks down into quires of 8 folios each. The collation is as follows: i⁴ (paper); ii² (marbled paper) | I-XXII⁸ | iii⁴ (paper); iv² (marbled paper).¹⁹ The last four folios are originally blank.

12. Signatures and catchwords

Signatures are a type of notation used to help in the binding process, given that they maintain the order of quires. There are two types: quire and leaf signatures. The former usually consist of a sequence of numbers at the bottom of the last verso or first recto of the quire, running *i*, *ij*, *ijj*, *iiij*, etc. The latter appear on each leaf in the first half of the quire and usually takes the form *ai*, *aij*, *aiij*, *bi*, *bij*, *iiij*, etc. (McCarren and Moffat 1998: 317). Apparently, the method used in *H509* is that of leaf signatures (f. 144r); this is difficult to tell because they are mostly cropped (f. 165r).

¹⁹ Taken from Young and Aitken's catalogue (1908: 416).

Catchwords constitute another system of notation for keeping the quires of a manuscript in order and for providing a cue for the binder. This method, which involves writing the first word of the next quire at the bottom of the last page of the previous one, is conventionally employed in *H509*. Thus, the catchword appears at the bottom of the eighth or last folio verso of the quire, on the right-hand side. Most catchwords in *H509* are accurate, but some of them are not totally precise, such as *anyse in* at the end of folio 163v (f. 164r starts with *anyse in*).

13. Hands and script

H509 is written in a uniform hand throughout,²⁰ which is characterised by being neat, small and compact. The writing is steady even though folios are not ruled, a fact which evinces that it is a practised hand. The script is mixed, showing features from both the Anglicana and Secretary scripts; this blend constituted a new kind of book hand, mainly for academic books, which remained in use until the introduction of the printed text (Parkes 1979: xxiv). Figure 5 supplies an illustration of the script in *H509* (taken from f. 87r), with Anglicana and Secretary graphs co-occurring not only in the same paragraph, but also within the same word (as in *greyns* [line 1] or *water* [line 4], for example). The instances of Anglicana are surrounded by an oval form, whereas those belonging to the Secretary script are within a square or rectangle. Typical Anglicana letter-forms are tight *g*, shaped like the numeral 8 (*gidere*, line 1); long forked *r* (*rose*, line 3); *w* with two initial strokes completed by bows (*water*, line 4); and two-compartment *a* (*a*, line 4), which is normally used when occurring on its own or in initial position. As for Secretary letter-forms, some instances of them are tight *s*, resembling the numeral 6 (*greyns*, line 1); single-compartment *a* (*lat*, line 2) with a pointed head, which is the most frequently employed form for *a* in *H509*; the short form of *r* (*pleuresie*, line 5); and simple *e* (*etik*, line 5).²¹

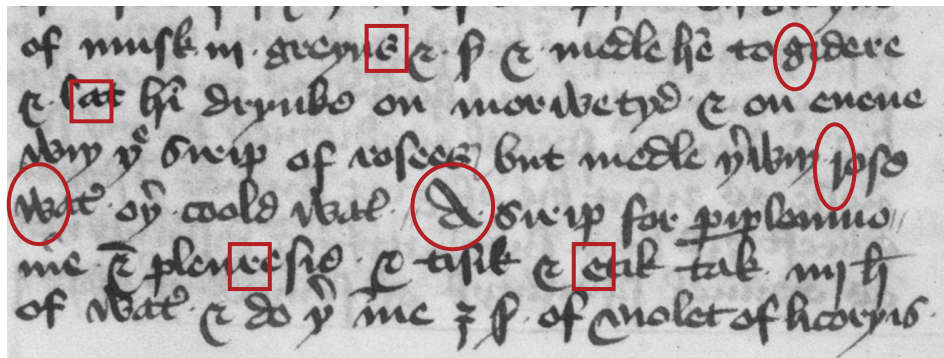


Fig. 5: Example of script with Anglicana and Secretary graphs

²⁰ With the exception of some folios at the end of the manuscript (ff. 168v, 169r, 171r, 171v), which contain a miscellany of notes and recipes.

²¹ An in-depth analysis of the hands and script in *H509* can be found in Esteban-Segura (2008b).

For letters *þ* and *y* a single symbol, *y*-like in appearance, is used. This renders the letter *þ* identical with *y* and, therefore, quite indistinguishable. The confusion of these two symbols as a single letter has to do with geographical location of the scribe, rather than with date (Benskin 1982: 14).

14. Punctuation

The most common marks of punctuation in *H509* are the punctus (which occurs in raised position), the virgule and the punctus elevatus, although the inventory of symbols also includes the colon, the paragraph mark and the caret. The text is heavily punctuated and marks can be combined, as usually happens with the punctus and the virgule (the latter can also be double).²²

15. Abbreviations

The abbreviations found in *H509*, whose main function is to save time and writing space, are standard and very frequent throughout the text. The methods employed to abbreviate are suspension, contraction, superior letters and special signs.

15.1. Suspension

Suspension, which is the oldest form of abbreviation, involves the omission of the final letter or letters of a word. Since they do not supply any signal of inflexion, suspensions may have different interpretations and thus lead to ambiguity (Johnson and Jenkinson 1915: xxii).

Suspension can be indicated by a punctus at the end of the word (figure 6) or by the use of a general sign of abbreviation over or through the last letter (figures 7-11). This sign can be a curved line or broken oblique stroke above the line (figure 7) or a horizontal line through the last letter in the consonantal groups *ch* (figure 8) and *ll* (figure 9), or in consonants such as *b* (figure 10), generally used to indicate the omission of *e*. An expansion mark,²³ that is, a curved line (which may appear dotted) over a final vowel usually stands for an omitted *m* or *n* (figure 11).

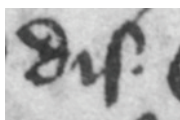


Fig. 6: 'dissolutif'

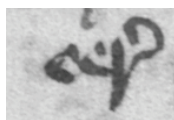


Fig. 7: 'eere'

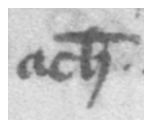


Fig. 8: 'ache'

²² For detailed information about the punctuation system in *H509*, see Esteban-Segura (2009).

²³ Other names for this mark of abbreviation are *bar*, *tittle* (*títula*) or *tilde* (Petti 1977: 22).

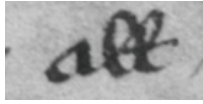


Fig. 9: 'all'

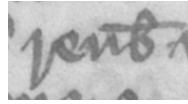


Fig. 10: 'reube'

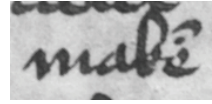


Fig. 11: 'make'

15.2. Contraction

Contraction implies the omission of one or more of the middle letters of a word. The sign used in *H509* for this method of abbreviation is the expansion mark for nasal consonants *m* (figure 12) and *n* (figure 13), which are often contracted.

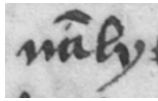


Fig. 12: 'namly'

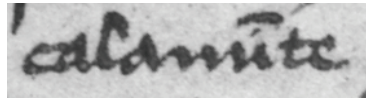


Fig. 13: 'calaminte'

15.3. Superior letters

Superior or superscript letters entail the insertion of one or more letters above the line to denote the omission of one or more letters on the line. The most common ones are *h'* for *hat* (figure 14) and *n'* for *with* (figure 15). Sometimes only one letter is placed above the line as though it had been left out accidentally (figure 16).

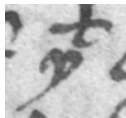


Fig. 14: 'hat'

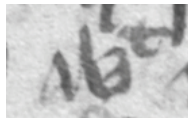


Fig. 15: 'with'



Fig. 16: 'p'

15.4. Special signs

Special signs or brevirgraphs normally represent two letters or one syllable and might look like one of the omitted letters or be seemingly arbitrary. Some of them are always consistent in their meaning, whereas others change it depending on the letter to which they are combined or their position within the word (Petti 1977: 23).

The letters *er* may be indicated by a broken stroke above the line (figure 17), by an upward curve from the end of a letter (figure 18) or by a horizontal stroke over the descender of *p* (figure 19).



Fig. 17: 'feure'



Fig. 18: 'water'

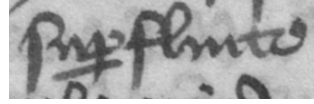


Fig. 19: 'superfluite'

A round curl on the line can stand for *con* (figure 20) and for *us* (figure 21). A flourish after the letter, turning downwards, generally represents *es* (figure 22). This sign can also occur as a suspension for *e*.

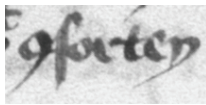


Fig. 20: 'conforter'

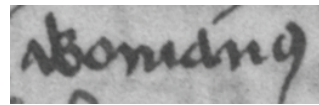


Fig. 21: 'womanus'

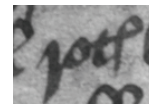


Fig. 22: 'rotas'

More brevigraphs and the letters they stand for are provided next: *ar* (figure 23); *ro* (figure 24); *rum* (figure 25); *ur* (figure 26).

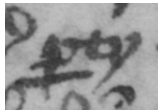


Fig. 23: 'party'

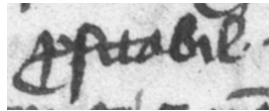


Fig. 24: 'profitabil'

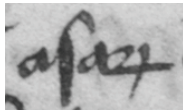


Fig. 25: 'asarum'

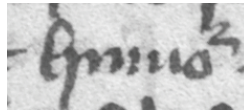


Fig. 26: 'humour'

Sometimes the same symbol can be employed for different combination of letters, as is the case with *ma* (figure 27), *ra* (figure 28) and *ua* (figure 29), or *ri* (figure 30) and *ni* (figure 31). The symbol presented in the last two figures is also used for most of the letters in *xristi* (figure 32). Johnson and Jenkinson (1915: xxiii) point out that some contractions, especially those of ecclesiastical origin, stand for non-contemporary spellings, mostly of Greek origin. The reasons for their adoption were probably religious—to evade writing sacred words in full—rather than for abbreviation purposes. In this particular case, the abbreviation in figure 32 represents the word *Xριστι*, but it could be regarded as a special sign rather than as a contraction, since the latter, as discussed above, is used to mark medial letters. Finally, a special sign is frequently used for *and* (figure 33).

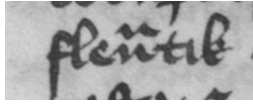


Fig. 27: 'fleumatik'

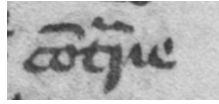


Fig. 28: 'contrarie'

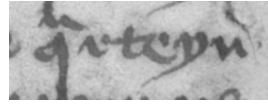


Fig. 29: 'quarteyn'

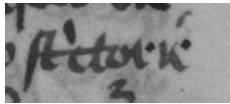


Fig. 30: 'strictorie'

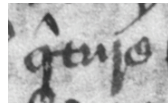


Fig. 31: 'quiture'

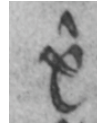


Fig. 32: 'xrist'



Fig. 33: 'and'

16. Decoration

Decoration is scarce in *H509*, as it is confined to a few rubricated initials on folios 61r, 62r, 148v and 149r (an example of one is supplied in figure 34) and the use of red ink for paragraph marks, for underlining heading titles and for providing a touch of colour in some letters on folios 60v-62r and 148v-49r. Rubricated initials, or simply large capitals, were probably intended to mark the beginning of sections or changing of subject throughout the whole manuscript, since a two-line-deep space for them has been left empty (figure 35).²⁴ Lack of time or of money may account for their unfinished state.

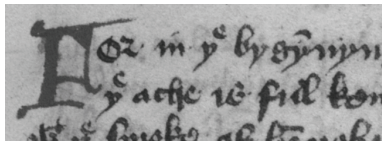


Fig. 34: Rubricated initial

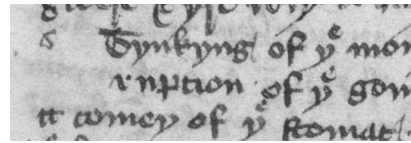
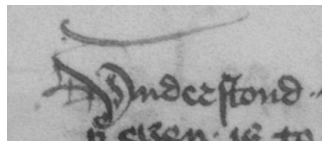


Fig. 35: Incomplete initial

Some letters contain gestures or flourishes (figures 36 and 37), especially at the beginning of folios:

Fig. 36: Decorated *b*Fig. 37: Decorated *v*

Illustrations of a face may be inserted within the text (underlining usually appears alongside them) to indicate that the word or words following should appear in the previous line, but

²⁴ With the exception of those folios with rubricated initials (ff. 61r, 62r, 148v and 149r).

owing to lack of space they have been written in the next one (figure 38). The heading at the top of the folio can also be accompanied by an illustration of a face (figure 39).

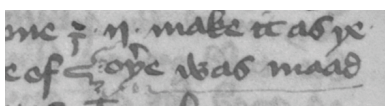


Fig. 38: Illustration of face in the text

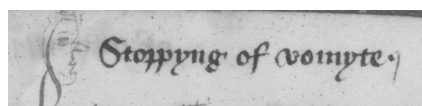


Fig. 39: Illustration of face in heading title

17. Scribal errors and corrections

The types of scribal error encountered in *H509* involve omission, addition, transposition, alteration, wrong division of words and inaccuracy in abbreviations. The scribe made the emendations as he was copying the text, employing several methods of correction, namely, deletion, alteration and insertion.²⁵

18. Marginalia

Marginal notes, which are frequent in *H509*, can act as textual markers, making reference to what is being dealt with in the text, or else they may be annotations added throughout time by the different users of the manuscript. The former usually appear in the right margin of rectos and in the left margin in the case of versos. They can be used to indicate that there is a change in the subject matter with respect to what is being discussed such as, for example, the explanation or introduction of a new sickness, in which case the main term is glossed (figure 40).

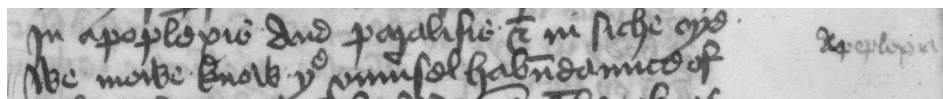


Fig. 40: Textual marker ('Apoplexia')

Textual annotations, added at later periods (figure 41), may function as visual devices for the reader. Thus, calls of attention are regularly found to highlight important passages or key contents represented by manicules, i.e. illustrations of a hand with cuffs whose forefinger points to the relevant information (figure 42). These marginal hands are a clear indication that the manuscript served a practical purpose, proving that it was undoubtedly consulted.

²⁵ For a fuller account of scribal errors and corrections found in *H509*, see Esteban-Segura (Forthcoming).

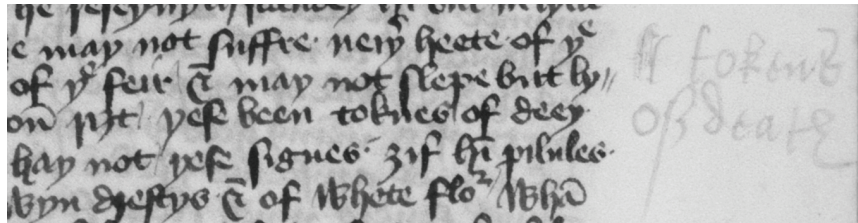


Fig. 41: Annotation by user (‘// tokens | of death’)

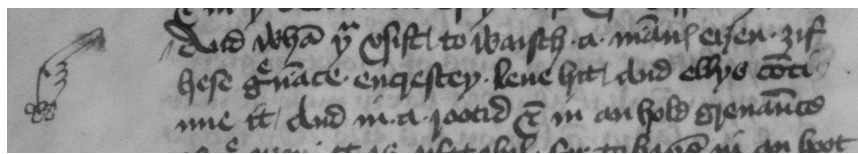


Fig. 42: Manicule

Scribal corrections can also appear in the margins, which may be used as well to write a word or words that have been left out in the process of copying the text. The abbreviation for the Latin expression *nota bene* is commonly found in the margins (figure 43). This corroborates the previous statement about the practical function of the book.

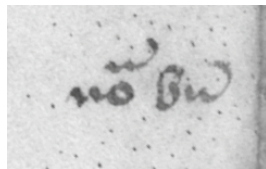


Fig. 43: ‘nota bene’

19. Authorities

In *H509*, there are explicit references to Macer (f. 2r; f. 2v), who is quoted in Latin (in fact the only Latin employed in the text). The author under this name was in all probability Odo de Meung-sur-Loire, who wrote the popular herbal commonly known as *Macer floridus de viribus herbarum* around 1100 (Egerton 1983: 446).

There is also overt allusion to sources in the preparation of remedies, for instance, “diarodon of galienes makynge oper of julians makynge” (f. 133v): *galienes* makes reference to Galen (second century AD), a physician and one of the most influential medical authors from antiquity, and *julians* probably refers to Emperor Julian of Constantinople (fourth century AD).²⁶

²⁶ Julian’s interest in medical knowledge is demonstrated in the suggestion made to Oribasios of Pergamum that he produce abstracts of Galen’s works (Egerton 1983: 428).

Books of philosophy are also mentioned, as on folio 10r: “j haue rad in diuerse bokys of philosophie”. This alludes to natural philosophy, the mediaeval term employed for both theoretical and experimental science, and most likely relates to works by Aristotle, Avicenna, Hippocrates or Pythagoras, along with other classical philosophers, as they form part of the sources handled by the author of the *Compendium medicinae*.

Although not acknowledged, the author of the original version made use of the writings of Johannes de Sancto Paulo, Roger de Baron, Trota, Roger Frugard and Averroes (Glick, Livesey and Wallis 2005: 196) and relied on many more authorities, such as Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Plato or Avicenna, to name but a few (see Handerson 2005: 25).

20. Dialect

The findings of a previous dialectal and linguistic study of *H509* (Esteban-Segura 2010) have made it possible to circumscribe its language in the East Midlands, specifically in the East Anglian variety, and to presuppose that the text was composed by just one scribe. There is a set of features, such as the spelling <x> for initial <sb>, which points to the southern part of Norfolk—and most possibly to Wymondham abbey, where there is a network of medical texts—as the place of composition of *H509*.

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Laura Esteban-Segura (PhD, Málaga) is Lecturer at the Department of English Philology of the University of Murcia. Her main research interests lie in the history of the English language, textual editing, palaeography/codicology, manuscript studies and translation. The more specialist aspects of her research focus on the study of unedited medical manuscripts in Middle English. She has published in specialised journals such as *Linguística e Filologia*, *English Studies* and *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, among others.

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa. Facultad de Letras. Universidad de Murcia. Campus de La Merced. 30071 Murcia, Spain. Tel.: +34 868 887870. Fax: +34 868 883185.