

The Late Middle
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of Constantinus
Africanus' *Venerabilis
Anatomia* in London,
Wellcome Library, MS
290 (ff. 1r-41v)

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By

Jesús Romero-Barranco

Cambridge
Scholars
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To Javier Calle-Martín
(Department of English, University of Málaga)

Hic mapit hler ueuerabilem ⁊ uotome
inu secundū Sahelēu. fyrst of the branc
and the hede and members seying a soure
them or yn them.

Sothly þ̄ brayn ys soyft
yn hys substance and
marowshy haupng long
schape after the lengthe
of the hede. ⁊ And yt ys all deyt ⁊ yn to thre
partyes. yn to the for part. ⁊ the medyll
party. and the hynder party. Whych p̄tyes
sen clepyd neutrycles or lytyl wombyes
wyth lony rowndnesse. ⁊ And yese neut
cles sen holdownesse yn whych sen the
spyritys of the soule. ⁊ And yn wyth pe
resauyn alteracyon and dygethyon. upon

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>a.</i>	Adjective
<i>b.</i>	Adverb
<i>bot. marg.</i>	Bottom margin
<i>c.</i>	Conjunction
<i>c.</i>	<i>Circa</i>
<i>d.</i>	Determiner
<i>del.</i>	Cancellation
<i>dup.</i>	Repetition
<i>e-MED</i>	Electronic <i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
<i>ext. marg.</i>	External margin
<i>f.</i>	Folio
<i>ff.</i>	Folios
LALME	<i>Linguistic Atlas of Late Middle English</i>
ME	Middle English
MED	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
<i>n.</i>	Noun
<i>ng.</i>	Deverbal noun
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>p.</i>	Preposition
<i>pl.</i>	Plural
<i>r.</i>	Recto
<i>sg.</i>	Singular
<i>v.</i>	Verso
<i>v.</i>	Verb
<i>va.</i>	Anomalous verb
W290	London, Wellcome Library, MS Wellcome 290 (ff. 1r-41v)

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I am particularly indebted to Amanda Engineer and Natalie Walters (Archivists, Department of Archives and Manuscripts, The Wellcome Library), Natalie Costaras and Crestina Forcina (Picture Researchers, Historical Collection, The Wellcome Library) and Dr. Christopher Hilton (Senior Archivist, The Wellcome Library) and to the Wellcome Trust for granting us permission to use this unique collection of manuscripts.

Special thanks are also due to Dr. Antonio Miranda-García and Joaquín Garrido-Garrido (computer technician), who designed the *ad hoc* tool for the automatic retrieval and handling of linguistic data.

FOREWORD

I was introduced to Mr. Romero-Barranco in Córdoba in December 2013 at the XXV International Conference of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature (*Selim*) by Dr. Javier Calle-Martín and there attended their paper “On the Use and Distribution of Object Clause Links in Early English Medical Writing.” As a result of such an interesting episode I started following Mr. Romero-Barranco’s academic tracks, which include my reading of some of his publications, such as 2014 “The Split Infinitive in the Asian Varieties of English” (*Nordic Journal of English Studies* 13.1: 129-146); and 2014 “On the Use of that/zero as Object Clause Links in Early English Medical Writing” (*Studia Neophilologica* 86.1: 1-16). More recently the interested reader can easily access 2015’s “On the Use of *make to* vs. *make ø* in Early English Medical Writing” (*Atlantis: Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies* 37.1: 157-177). Despite the fact that attending academic conferences tends to be entertaining, it was also fruitful on such an occasion.

If we also take into account that the author of this book finished his master’s degree in 2013, and that two interesting publications dealing with texts preserved in MSS Wellcome 411 and 290 (*Analecta Malacitana* numbers 35 and 36, both from 2013) came from his scholarly efforts, one is rather tempted to have great expectations about the future of philological and medieval studies in Málaga. These may even pervade to other less fortunate locations in Spain and maybe abroad and overseas.

So when I received a call to duty from Málaga in order to provide some introductory words for the publication of *The Late Middle English Version of Constantinus Africanus’ Venerabilis Anatomia in London, Wellcome Library, MS 290 (ff. 1r-41v)* I started pondering on how could I make use of this text’s very interesting lexicon and rake “the brayn of Nucha” (line 830, folio 27 recto) without becoming too involved with Arabic *nuha* (*nuḥā’* or *nuḥāṣ*), and such like (because this text shows an unusually strong Arabic influence in its vocabulary),¹ how to sound convincing enough without having to resort to the efforts that may trigger “the goyng oute of the 3erbus . of the gutt . to the ballok codde” (ll. 897-898, folio 29 verso) something not unusual in those slightly elderly academics that lead sedate parochial lives in the vicinity of the countryside and its not unseemingly beastly joys, and how to say something approximately as convenient to the case now commented

on as “þer the cotys of the ballok and the skyn growen or bene brede . yn whych the stonys be contenede” (927-929, folio 30 verso) which might not at the same time provoke uncomfortable surfeits of verbosity and eternal damnation for having promoted unnecessary profanity in the academic discourse. Let me explain just a little further why I have chosen those three examples from the *Anatomy*.

Late Middle English texts seem to be closer to the modern world than earlier medieval works because their spelling – despite the mannerisms and oddities- is closer to the 15th and 16th more extended standardised forms established by the Chancery and the Printers than the previous Early Middle English or Old English texts which have come down to us. Their phonology, morphology and partially their syntax and lexicon make them more remote. The three short sentential examples I chose may be proof of that. However they are also proof that the readability and interest of this medical treatise is particularly good in idiomatic terms: most present day speakers of English would most likely word these expressions similarly in the familiar (or everyday) register –quite a world apart from the physicians’ jargon. This is fairly unusual in scientific prose from the Middle Ages which tends to make contents even more remote from the modern reader by sticking closely to Medieval Latin syntactic and lexical patterns even when the works are not mere translations from foreign texts.

Constantinus Africanus’ *Venerabilis Anatomia* runs for 1290 lines, about ten thousand words, in manuscript Wellcome 290. It constitutes a sufficient corpus for the sort of studies that this edition provides and it is also a remarkable example to illustrate that the vernacular simplicity of the rhetorical construct of this work is not at all at odds with the precise medical terminology and technical knowledge displayed by its author(s). I agree that reading fifteenth-century English medical treatises is not everybody’s cup of tea, but I must also emphasize that going through this text in some detail and reading the edition and studies that precede it has stirred a new interest in my approaches to medieval philology. I hope that such an interest may also provide other academics with an example of what can and needs to be done with Late Middle English scientific prose for the advancement of the disciplines involved in materializing how we still need to learn from the past to have a brighter future. Disciplines that blend together the CA (computer age) tools, techniques and methods with the BC (before the computer) paradigms in the way in which the Málaga research groups tend to do and Mr. Romero-Barranco has wisely demonstrated that can be done.

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University of Oviedo

Notes

¹ The influence of Arabic words in medieval English (despite the moderate number that OED may list as neat borrowings) is salient in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, literary theory, astrology, gardening and agriculture, chemistry, war, games... See for instance: Charles Burnett 1997: *The Introduction of Arabic Learning into England*. The Panizzi Lectures. London: British Library and Jessica Wilson 2001: Arabic in Middle English. <http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~cpercy/courses/6361Wilson.htm>. More specifically: Mary S. Serjeantson 1961 (1935): *A History of Foreign Words in English*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. [Chapter ten is devoted to Arabic loanwords (and those from other Asian languages).]; and Andrew Breeze 1991: Old English Ealfara, 'Pack-Horse': A Spanish-Arabic Loanword. *Notes and Queries* March (1991): 15-17. Mentioning Chaucer's *Treatise on the astrolabe* may also be to the point here, in the same way that Constantinus Afer is mentioned in the *General Prologue* (lines 430-434) as "Constantyn the cursed monk". The field of medicine, which has received some attention (see M. A. R. Al-Fallouji 2009: Arabic Influence on English Language in Medicine and Routes for the Linguistic Transfer. Find it at <http://www.ihams.org/index.php>; and Erin Ellerbeck 2005: Middle English Medical Terminology: The Body. <http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~cpercy/courses/6361ellerbeck.htm>) is still in need of a more in-depth study (maybe to appear as a result of Juhani Norri's project entitled *Dictionary of Medical Vocabulary in English, 1375-1550* (http://www.uta.fi/ltl/plural/common/projects/dictionary_medical_vocabulary.html), as this text of *Venerabilis Anatomia* clearly demonstrates.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MANUSCRIPT

The present chapter focuses on the manuscript witness, paying attention to the source and contents of the volume, together with a codicological and palaeographic analysis. In addition, a full folio of Wellcome 290 (ff. 1r-41v) is reproduced so as to provide the reader with an original sample of the manuscript under study.

1.1. Source and Contents

The heterogeneous nature of Middle English was represented by the so-called Middle English dialect¹, which co-occurred in England, particularly in the period 1100-1500. Extant texts from this period have come to us through handwritten documents, which cover a wide range of categories, such as scientific writing, literature or legal proceedings, among others. From all these categories, scientific writing could be highlighted, as it offers a more natural representation of the language, far from the usually ornamented literary or legal language. Apart from the vernacular texts which may have served the ordinary layman, there were others that were made for the use of professional physicians, among which versions of Hippocrates or Galen can be found (Talbot 1967: 191).

The manuscript under scrutiny in the present edition is housed in London, Wellcome Library. It is referenced as MS Wellcome 290, and entitled *Pseudo-Galen, Claudius, 131 – 201*, comprising 56 folios of which the last three are blank (Moorat 1962: 186). The present edition, however, focuses on the first part of the volume (ff. 1r-41v)², housing an anonymous Middle English translation of Constantinus Africanus' *Venerabilis Anatomia* (henceforth W290).

As for the historical background of Constantinus Africanus, he is supposed to have been born in the 11th century in modern Tunis or Sicily, "hence his agnomen or title of place, Africanus" (de Weever 1988: 95). He was probably educated in the famous academy patronized by the Fatimid rulers in Cairo and he seems to have been driven out by the invading nomads when he returned to his native country (Newton 1994: 19). He

was certainly an important character when he first arrived in Salerno, where he was considered a respected figure and with “some considerable worldly backing” (Newton 1994: 20). As de Weever puts it,

Constantinus’ translation of Arabic medical texts into Latin gave the West a number of important works. These formed the foundations of modern science and biology. He was a much cited authority from the twelfth until the sixteenth century, and his translations were widely circulated (1988: 95)

An illustration of the importance held by Constantinus Africanus in the field of mediaeval medicine, where he was considered an authority, is a quotation from Chaucer’s *General Prologue of The Canterbury Tales*,

With us ther was a doctour of phisik; In al this world ne was the noon hym lik, To speke of phisik and of surgerye For he was grounded in astronomye. [...] Wel knew he the olde Esculapius, And Deyscorides, and eek Rufus, Olde Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen, Serapion, Razis, and Avycen, Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn, Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn (Chaucer, *General Prologue of The Canterbury Tales*, ll. 429-434)

In this fragment, Chaucer is introducing one of the pilgrims who was part of the company, the ‘doctour of phisik’, and, in order to give an account of his mastery on the field of Medicine, Chaucer assures that he is well acquainted with the works of Constantinus Africanus, among others. This quotation by such an influential author as Chaucer perfectly portrays the significance of Constantinus Africanus in the period, as Chaucer places him next to other prestigious scholars, namely Galen or Avicenna.

The proliferation of Middle English translations of this scientific material in Latin shows the interest of mediaeval England in this kind of literature and, besides, the emergence of the English language as the language of science, far from the colloquial registers to which it had been restricted after the Norman Conquest (Blake 1992: 5).³ According to Voigts and Kurtz (2000), there is another copy of MS Wellcome 290 in the Wellcome Library, referenced MS Wellcome 397 (ff.1r-14v), which is incomplete.⁴ This copy of MS Wellcome 290 (ff. 1r-41v) is particularly important as it contains a prologue attributing Lanfranc of Milan as the main authority of the text, a fact that suggests that the treatise was originally composed in Latin by Constantinus Africanus and, some two centuries later, Lanfranc of Milan was somewhat involved in that particular witness. He was a native of Milan who was a student of the great Italian surgeon William of Saliceto and he was responsible for

introducing the knowledge of Islamic and Italian writers to northern Europe (Keiser 1998: 3645). He eventually became a popular professor of surgery at the Collège de St. Côme⁵ in France, where “the dean of the faculty requested that he wrote about what he knew, and Lanfranc put on paper his knowledge of anatomy, embryology, ulcers, fistulae, fractures, and dislocated joints, as well as some nonsurgical subjects such as herbal medicines: the result became a major work on medicine” (Kelly 2009: 67). This work was carried out in two stages; first, after he moved from Milan to Lyon, the physician wrote the *Chirurgia Parva* (‘Short Surgery’), a surgical summary for the education of his sons; some years later, he moved to Paris, where he joined the surgeons’ guild and composed *Chirurgia Magna* (‘Complete, or Great, Surgery’), which is composed of five treatises⁶ (Pioreschi 1996: 458):

- 1) Definition of Surgery, qualities of a surgeon, anatomy, wounds and ulcers.
- 2) Wounds on particular parts of the body with their anatomy.
- 3) Surgical diseases *a capite ad calcem*⁷.
- 4) Fractures and dislocations (*algebra*).
- 5) Drugs.

1.2. Codicology

This section analyses the volume from a codicological point of view. Consequently, features such as material, dimension, ink, decoration, quiring, ruling and foliation will be faithfully described. These descriptions are the result of the examination of the digitized images provided by the Wellcome Library, together with the accurate information provided by Moorat’s *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts on Medicine and Science in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library* (1962).

1.2.1. Material and Dimension

The volume is written in vellum⁸ and bounded with 19th century vellum binding (Moorat 1962: 186). It can be safely said that it is in overall good condition, although some damage can be observed on the margins, which are slightly cropped. The dimensions of the volume are 18 x 13 cm (Moorat 1962: 186).

1.2.2. Decoration and ink

The decoration is an essential part of the manuscript book and has historically attracted the attention of scholars. In fact, many manuscripts include rich illuminated borders and miniatures, therefore being unusual for a completed medieval book to comprise nothing but plain regular script (De Hamel 1992: 45). In the Middle Ages, during the late Middle English in particular, “the non-illustrative decorative elements, which have been studied so intensely for earlier periods, have generally been neglected in art historical research” (Derolez 2003: 39-40). The reason for this lies in the fact that innovation took place in the pictures that accompanied the text, while initials and other elements of decoration were more and more standardized due to production needs.

W290 is written in two main colours, brown and red, the former used for the body of the manuscript while the latter is preferred for the headings and the endings of the chapters (usually rendered in Latin). The brownish colour used in the body slightly fades⁹ after f. 25, and it is kept in this shade until the end of the volume.

The scribe also represents large illuminated initials in gold and colours with feather ornaments at the beginning of each chapter (ff. 1r, 29r, 37r and 41v). Furthermore, some initials are illuminated in gold and blue in order to highlight important sections within a chapter. Paragraph marks are represented in an unusual form, in gold and blue on a red ground (Moorat 1962: 186).

1.2.3. Quiring

The quiring of this volume employs an octavo opening (Moorat 1962: 186). This was a regular practice during the Middle Ages, although “the relative thinness of the material often induced producers of books to use quires of more than four *bifolia*, indeed of six or up to twelve and even more *bifolia*” (Derolez 2003: 32). W290 presents a regular quire, which was not very usual in the late Middle Ages, as books often included single folios in between the pages of the quires. Seven quires were needed to create this volume, which account up to 56 folios.

1.2.4. Ruling

Ruling was used to keep the lines of the text straight. According to Petti, “before the writing commenced [...] a frame was provided for the writing area of each page and the lines ruled” (1977: 6)¹⁰. In the late 15th century

ruling became less fashionable and only the frame remained, an element which would be omitted from the 16th century on (Petti 1977: 6). Constantinus Africanus' *Venerabilis Anatomia* is written in one single column, presenting both the frame (prolonged to the outer edges) and the lines ruled, suggesting that this witness was plausibly written before the middle of the 15th century (see Plate I). In fact, Derolez states that “two-column rulings were preferred throughout late Middle English and early Modern English, but in the fifteenth century a renewed preference among some for layouts with long lines is detectable, probably under Italian Humanistic influence” (2003: 37).

1.2.5. Foliation

Foliation was not a usual feature until the end of the Middle Ages, although a sort of numbering or sequencing may be found. Thus, *quire-marks*, consisting of a Roman numeral, were written in the lower margin of the first or last page of a quire. In addition, *signatures* could be found, indicating not only the order of the quires, but also of the *bifolia* of each quire (Derolez 2003: 35). W290, however, does not follow any of these two practices, as folios are systematically numbered with arabic numerals at the top right corner of each folio recto, sometimes blurred by the passing of time, as shown below.

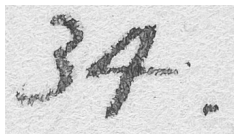


Fig. 1.1. Foliation in W290 (f. 34r)

1.3. Palaeography

Palaeography could be defined as the study of the different scripts with the objective of providing an estimate date of composition. Denholm-Young states that “the business of a palaeographer is not only to read, classify, date, and determine the provenance of a manuscript, but to recognize textual errors that spring from the scribe’s misreading of what he is copying” (1964: 1). The aim of the present section is then to describe the most relevant letterforms of W290 in order to propose an approximate date of composition for the manuscript. Features such as numerals, marginalia, catchwords, manuscript corrections and punctuation are also analysed.

1.3.1. Script

W290 is written using a fairly legible hybrid script, consisting of a combination of bastard Anglicana with some characteristic features of the Secretary script.

According to Petti, the Anglicana script “first appeared in England in the 12th century” and it “predominated until close on the middle of the 15th century” (1977: 14). In these three centuries the style went through some alterations, although some characteristics predominated over time, such as the double-lobed <a>, the <d> with a looped stem, a two compartment figure 8 form of the letter <g>, the long forked <r> and the <w> made up of two looped l’s and a 3 (Petti 1977: 14).

It was in the middle of the 15th century that another script appeared, the Secretary script, which grew in popularity becoming widespread towards the end of that same century. Inevitably, the coexistence of these two scripts made them borrow “from one another both in features of general style and in use of graphs” (Petti 1977: 15). Among the distinctive letters of the Secretary script are the single-lobed <a> with a pointed head; the single compartment <g> with a pointed head and a small tail; the short, right-shouldered and v form of <r>; the final <s> looking like a small *B* or *c* and 3 run together; and the <w> usually resembling double v (Petti 1977: 14).

Bastard Anglicana is the result of “the borrowings among the two different scripts. Its letterforms are defined as larger than those of Anglicana Formata, better spaced and with greater emphasis placed upon its calligraphic execution, as a result of the merging of two previous variants of the Gothic script, *anglicana* and *textualis*” (Parkes 1969: xviii; Brown 1990: 81; Derolez 2003: 140). Characteristic features of this blended script are the angularity and squarish proportions of the letterforms, together with a productive ease of writing.

The script in W290 combines a bastard Anglicana hand with some distinctive shapes from the Secretary script. Actually, Roberts (2005: 164) and Brown (1990: 100) term this kind of script as *cursive anglicana formata hybrida* and *anglicana formata hybrida*, respectively. Similar instances of this hand can be found in Parkes (1969: pls. 7-8), Brown (1990: pl. 37) or Derolez (2003: pls. 84-86).

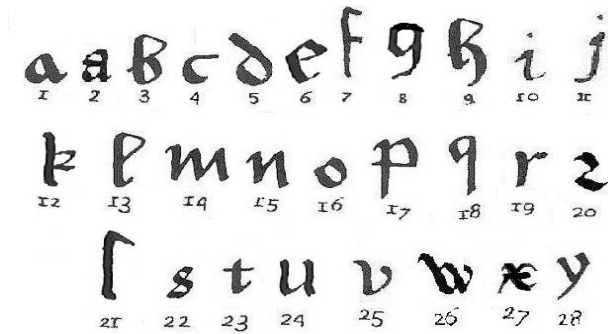


Fig. 1.2. Inventory of letterforms in W290

The clear evidence of this coexistence is the fact that W290 presents different renderings for the same letter in specific cases, where the use of one graph or the other has to do with its position within the word. Figure 1.8 above reproduces the inventory of minuscules used by the scribe where letters have been accordingly numbered for reference purposes.

Among the letters following the Anglicana style, the following stand out: the two-lobed <a> (2); the <h> with a long supralinear stroke curving right and forming a lobe, with a second infralinear leg which curves slightly to the left (9); the letter <k> with a long supralinear stroke slightly curving right, from which two small strokes stem out upward and downward, the upper one forming a lobe occasionally (12); the long <s> (21) and the sigma-like <s> (22); and the <x> with two crossed legs with a small horizontal stroke (27).

The Secretary script, on the other hand, is featured by: the single-lobed <a> (1); the letter with two rounded lobes, the lower of which is slightly bigger than the upper one (3); the <d> with a lobe and a curve ascender (5); the <g> consisting of a single compartment with a rounded head and a small tail (8); a vertical stroke with a small rightward lobe at the top for <l> (13); an infralinear stroke with a small leftward lobe at the top for <q> (18); the right-shouldered <r> (19) and the two-shaped <r> (20); and the canonical Secretary form for <w> (26).

All in all, the palaeographic analysis suggests that the manuscript was composed towards the middle of the 15th century.

1.3.2. Numerals

According to Hector, roman numerals were dominant in England until the 16th century, when they were replaced by arabic numerals. In this vein,

oblique angle. It was almost entirely cursive except in its set form, and could obviously be written at great speed” (1977: 17). Furthermore, scribes felt free to introduce individual variations into their writings, to the point that some of the letters were almost unrecognizable (Tannenbaum 1930: 22).

1.3.4. Catchwords

Catchwords were a tool used by scribes in order not to make mistakes in the sequencing of the quires of the manuscript, thus, “the first word of a quire was written at the bottom of the last leaf of the preceding quire, to ensure that the pages of the quire were in the right order” (Petti 1977: 6). In W290, catchwords can be found in ff. 8v, 32v and 40v. In addition, the scribe occasionally writes the number of the chapter starting in the next folio, as in ff. 16v and 24v.

1.3.5. Abbreviations

As a fifteenth-century witness of scientific *Fachprosa*, W290 features a great number of abbreviations. The main function of these abbreviations, as Petti points out, “is to save time and space [...] and [...] make the maximum use of the relatively expensive writing surface” (1977: 22). From a chronological point of view, English documents of the 12th century display the [abbreviation] system in the most elaborate form, while in the latter Middle Ages some of them were gradually discarded (Hector 1958: 29). In addition, Derolez states that genre is found to play an important role in the use of abbreviations, as

scholastic manuscripts and those of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in general contain without doubt the largest number of abbreviations (mostly specific to the subject concerned: theology, philosophy, law, natural science, medicine...), but the degree of abbreviation is far less in liturgical and literary manuscripts (2003: 187).

In spite of being a common mediaeval practice, it is often difficult for the contemporary linguist or palaeographer to compile a complete list of the abbreviations in use during the Middle Ages, as “not all the penmen used the same abbreviations and those abbreviations may stand for different words or letters” (Tannenbaum 1930: 119). As for the typology of abbreviations, different kinds or techniques could be found in mediaeval manuscripts, where Tannenbaum distinguishes contraction, elision,

Hector states that “they are not really common in English documents before about 1530” (1958: 43; also Petti 1977: 28). Roman cardinal numbers are observed in the manuscript under study, where the last number in a group is found to be represented using the *i-longa* <j>, as in <ij>, <iij> or <iiij>, representing two, three and four, respectively. Furthermore, whenever the Roman numeral 5 is rendered (fig. 1.11), it is always represented using <v> instead of <u>.

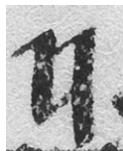


Fig. 1.3. Two



Fig. 1.4. Three



Fig. 1.5. Seven

Ordinal numbers, in turn, are also reproduced in Roman figures, but -th and -de are added in superscript, the raised letter being there “from habit rather than for indicating omission” (Petti 1977: 24).



Fig. 1.6. Fourth



Fig. 1.7. Sixth

Roman numerals in W290 also point to the fact that the treatise was translated towards the mid-fifteenth century, thus corroborating the conclusions obtained in the previous section.

1.3.3. Marginalia

Apart from the numbering of the folios, the external margins serve as a kind of index with which the reader could identify the key topics in the different parts of the treatise (ff. 2v, 3r, 4r, 9v, 33v and 35r), consisting mostly of anatomical terms (Moorat 1962: 186).

From a palaeographical point of view, these annotations seem to have been written by a 16th century hand (Moorat 1962: 186), following the conventions of the Secretary Elizabethan script. According to Petti, this script was “a compact hand, written with a very fine nib held at a slightly

absorption, curtailment, brevigraphs and superior letters, apart from likely combinations of these (1930: 119).

In the present edition, abbreviations have been expanded in italics on the basis of the most frequent spelling of the word appearing in the text. However, when the full form is not recorded in the text, the form appearing in the *MED* is represented. In W290, the scribe makes use of three kinds of abbreviation: *contraction*, *brevigraphs* and *superior letters*.

1.3.5.1. Contractions

Contraction is the commonest method of abbreviation, and consisted in the omission of one or more letters from the middle of a word (Tannenbaum 1930:119; Petti 1977: 22). In W290 the scribe makes use of the tilde with this purpose.

Contractions are mainly used as a substitute for the consonants <m> and <n>, and for the vowels <e> and <i>. The choosing of one letter or the other will depend on the context in which the word appears.



Fig. 1.8. 'dysposycion' (f. 8v)

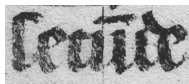


Fig. 1.9 'seconde' (f. 6r)



Fig. 1.10. 'come' (f. 2r)

Furthermore, this kind of abbreviation can be used to indicate the doubling of a letter. In this case, the abbreviated letter has been expanded in italics.

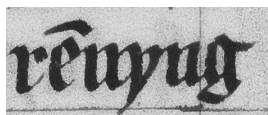


Fig. 1.11. 'remnyng' (f. 9v)



Fig. 1.12. 'commone' (f. 3v)

1.3.5.2. Brevigraphs

Brevigraphs generally represent at least two letters or one syllable, and might resemble one of the omitted letters or be apparently arbitrary in shape (Petti 1977: 23). According to Tannenbaum, "scriveners had developed the habit of contracting certain frequently recurring syllables, both at the beginning and at the end of words" (1930: 125). The following brevigraphs have been observed in W290:

a) The group <per> is abbreviated with one dot on each side of the stem of the letter <p>.



Fig. 1.13. 'petyes' (f. 9r)

b) The groups <pro> and <pre> are abbreviated with letter <p> with a loop:

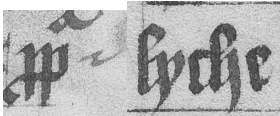


Fig. 1.14. 'propelyche' (f. 31v)



Fig. 1.15. 'profitable' (f. 17r)

c) The group <ra> is represented with a supralinear tilde:



Fig. 1.16. 'branchyng' (f. 28r)

d) The groups <er> and <re> are abbreviated placing a curved stroke over the previous letter.



Fig. 1.17. 'maner' (f. 20v)

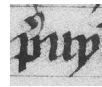


Fig. 1.18. 'preuy' (f. 14r)

e) The group <us> was abbreviated with a symbol resembling a <9>¹¹ with an infralinear stroke curved leftward. This form of abbreviation is only found in the Latin words, as "the occurrence of this final or medial *us*-brevigraph in the vernacular is not very frequent" (Tannenbaum 1930: 127).



Fig. 1.19. 'Albugenius' (f. 8v)

f) A version of the Tironian nota, represents the copulative conjunction *and* (Petti 1977: 23), which is rendered as a sort of small *t* on the line with a short horizontal bisector (Tannenbaum 1930: 132).



Fig. 1.20. 'and' (f. 2r)

1.3.5.3 Superior letters

Superior letters are also a form of abbreviation, although they sometimes seem to be a habit of the scribe. These letters appear both in medial and in final position. When a supralinear letter does not involve an abbreviation, it is simply lowered to the line in the edition. The following superior letters functioning as abbreviations are found in W290:



Fig. 1.21. 'bat' (f. 11v)



Fig. 1.22. 'with' (f. 5r)

Among the scribal habits that involve the using of superior letters, the following have been witnessed:



Fig. 1.23. 'be' (f. 36v)

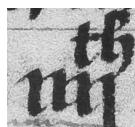


Fig. 1.24. 'iiijth' (f. 10r)

1.3.6. Manuscript corrections

Professional scribes used to revise their own compositions so that they would detect and correct any scribal error. These corrections could be carried out using different techniques: *erasure*, *cancellation*, *expunction*, *underscoring*, *obliteration*, *vacation*, *dissolution*, *alteration* and *insertion* (Petti 1977: 29). W290 shows evidence of *cancellation*, which consists in striking with ink with one or more straight lines, as shown in the following instances:



Fig. 1.25. ~~clepyd~~ (f.5r)



Fig. 1.26. ~~bone~~ (f. 17r)



Fig. 1.27. ~~lyue~~ (23v)



Fig. 1.28. ~~goyng~~ (28v)

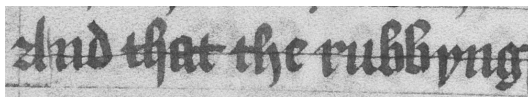


Fig. 1.29. ~~And that the rubbyng~~ (f. 30r)

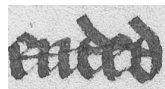


Fig. 1.30. ~~ended~~ (35r)

As can be observed above, *cancellation* could delete not only a single word or letter, but also a whole clause or sentence. The scarce number of

emendations in W290 constitutes a reason to think that this treatise was presumably a valuable copy, a fact which is further corroborated by framed ruling or conventional margins.

1.3.7. Punctuation

Punctuation in Middle English manuscripts was far less consistent than it is nowadays, and perhaps its apparent arbitrariness could be signalled as the reason why punctuation has been traditionally disregarded in the literature (Jekinson 1926: 154; Denholm-Young 1964: 77; Arakelian 1975: 614-615; Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 2012: 32). Concerning the typology of punctuation symbols in the Middle Ages, Parkes distinguishes the following punctuation marks (1992: 42-45): *punctus*, *punctus elevatus*, *punctus interrogatiuus*, *litteræ notabiliores*, *virgule*, *paragraph mark* and *positura*. In addition to this repertory, it should be taken into account that “notwithstanding the currency of these punctuation symbols in the period, every scribe is ultimately free to imprint his own repertory of symbols” (Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 2012: 32). W290, however, just features two punctuation marks: the *punctus* and the *paragraph mark*.

The period is the most frequent punctuation mark in the witness, amounting up to 914 occurrences. It is employed as a general pause mark to denote sentential and clausal relations (Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 2005: 37-42). Among those usages, the *punctus* may be used to signal the end of a meaningful statement and the beginning of a new one:

Fyrst of the brane and the hede and membres beyng aboute them or yne them . Sothly þe brayn ys soyft yn hys substance and marowhy hauyng long schape after the lengthe of the hede . (f. 1r).

To introduce coordinate clauses: the period is employed to link coordinate sentences introduced by the coordinators *and*, *but* and *nor*:

Toward the share ys set þe bledder . whych ys þe vassyl of the vryn . and yt ys synewy . and the neke of yt ys fleshy os oft nost . and she hath yn hyr two cots the whych bene ij . skynnes . and þer be yn her many smale veynys and arteries . (f. 35r).

And the lung ys sett yn the same holounesse . but after hys beyng he loweth to the ryght syde . and yn the myddys of hym he boueth much to the left syde . (f. 26v).