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# Punctuation in a Fifteenth-century Scientific Treatise (MS Cambridge L1.4.14)[1]

La punteggiatura nel Medio Inglese è un tema che ha ricevuto scarsa attenzione accademica fino alla fine del Novecento, a causa della sua apparente arbitrarietà e mancanza di sistematicità. Tuttavia, quest'idea è stata recentemente messa in discussione da diversi studi specifici; in questo contesto, la mia analisi si concentra sulla punteggiatura utilizzata in un trattato astrologico del tardo Medio Inglese con l'obiettivo di: a) fornire un catalogo completo degli usi e delle funzioni dei diversi simboli osservati; b) discutere se questi simboli abbiano funzione retorica o grammaticale; c) formulare ipotesi circa la loro possibile controparte moderna. Per questo studio il testo preso in considerazione è il manoscritto Cambridge L1.4.14 (n. 3).

## 1. Introduction

The subject of medieval punctuation has been ignored during the first half of the twentieth century, the main reason for this being its seeming arbitrariness (Rodríguez-Álvarez 1999: 27-28). Reimer has noted that "there is little literature on medieval punctuation, partly because there is so much evidence which needs to be studied, and partly because editors of texts have considered the effort needed to be a waste of time (since usually the pointing is not authorial)" (Reimer 1998). Though still under-researched, the study of punctuation marks in medieval texts has been revised in the last decades through the study of the punctuation system of particular manuscripts, thus refuting, to a broad extent, the traditional concept of erratic punctuation (Rodríguez-Álvarez 1999; Alonso-Almeida 2002; Calle-Martín 2004; Esteban Segura 2005). Parkes argues that "scribes punctuated and correctors corrected where they thought that confusion was likely to arise in the minds of the readers for whom the text was prepared" (1978: 137).

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More problematic is the question of modernizing, that is, should we modernize punctuation so as to make it understandable to the contemporary reader or should we preserve the original punctuation? If the former is the choice, the original intention of the scribe may be distorted as we are just given the editor's interpretation, which in some cases may be erroneous, as "no modern (or any) editor can be said to know the language of a scribe better than the scribe did" (Lass 2004: 25); "therefore virtually all editorial interventions in early texts represent potential losses of information, or additions of false information. Both are prejudicial to good history-making, and in the end are equivalent falsifications" (Lass 2004: 26). In this fashion, Blake (1977: 67) argues

> The effect of the modern editor's approach is […] to imply that there is only one possible meaning and his punctuation strives to make that meaning obvious to their readers. [...] I do not mean [...] that medieval writers were trying to exploit ambiguity, but simply that their punctuation would have allowed their audiences to understand what they had composed in rather diverse ways.

I agree with both scholars in the sense that the various meanings of a medieval text should not be reduced to the only perspective of a particular editor because, "by modernising, the editor is forcing particular parses on the reader, and at the same time removing what the scribe apparently thought were prosodic details worth indicating" (Lass 2004: 35). In my view, the original system of punctuation is, as a matter of fact, a *desideratum* in modern editions. Otherwise, if modernisation is imperative, the original punctuation should be included in the critical apparatus.

An important issue of historical punctuation is to discern whether marks of punctuation were used grammatically or rhetorically. Grammatical punctuation, on the one hand, shows the structural relationship between the constituents of the sentence so as to bear syntactic sense; rhetorical punctuation, on the other hand, helps the reader to produce a meaningful oral performance, sometimes "directing the lowering or raising of the voice with appropriate pauses, and marking, on some occasions, ornamental devices of sound and rhythm" (Zeeman 1956: 11). Nowadays, punctuation is considered to be grammatical, but this is not so clear in medieval works, where it may depend, to a broad extent, on whether the texts were written to be read aloud or not.

Therefore, in light of these issues, my objectives in this paper are the following: a) to describe the punctuation practice found in MS Cambridge Ll. 4. 14. (n. 3); and b) to find, if possible, the most appropriate rendering of these marks in modern punctuation. Thus, my study is organized as follows: Section 2 presents the text under investigation, including the physical description along with the dating and provenance of the text; in Section 3 the methodology is described, while Section 4 deals with the marks of punctuation used, together with an account of their different uses and functions; finally, our conclusions are offered in section 5.

## 2. *The manuscript*

The text is an anonymous astronomical and philosophical treatise of the second quarter of the fifteenth century, housed in Cambridge University Library, MS Ll. 4. 14. (n. 3). Written in vellum by a sole hand, it measures 285mm x 210mm. The volume is in good preservation and most of the passages can be read without great problems. It shows a hybrid script containing features of fourteenth-century *Anglicana Formata* and fifteenth-century *Secretary*. The former is characterised by "a squatter and squarer appearance, some broken strokes and hooked serifs" featured by "thicker and more angled pen strokes than for normal *Anglicana* [...], its ascenders were somewhat taller and usually arched" (Petti 1977: 14). On the other hand, the *Secretary* "is a much more angular hand than the *Anglicana,* which looks quite rounded by comparison, being written with an angled nib with a studied contrast of thick and thin strokes" (Petti 1977: 14). The characteristic letters of the *Anglicana Formata* script are *g, r, s* (in final position) and *w.* The *Secretary* is mainly exemplified by *b, f, l, m, p, s* (in initial position), *q* and *y.*

The text deals with a) a description of the planets and their power and influence on humankind; b) an account of the twelve signs of the zodiac and the kind of personalities to which they correspond; c) a description of the constellations (i.e. the moon and the sun); and d) a detailed study of the external appearance of humans (including the size of the nose, the head, the eyes, the face, the teeth, etc.) and their effect on human behaviour, among many others. Unfortunately, the text is unfin-

ished, terminating with an incomplete description of the human nose. In view of the content of the treatise, there are grounds to think that the text was written for those interested in the study of the astrolabe.

Concerning dialect, according to the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English* (*LALME*), the text-language is mixed (McIntosh, Samuels and Benskin 1986: 68), and cannot be associated with any specific variety.

## 3. Methodology

This study is entirely based on a microfilmed copy of the text. Photocopies were printed from the microfilm for a subsequent transcription of the text. The next step consisted in preparing a diplomatic edition. The plain text file with the transcription eventually served as an input for WORDSMITH TOOLS 3.0 (Scott 1996), which generated the whole set of concordances automatically, along with the context and location within the corpus. This output was later saved as an EXCEL spreadsheet. EXCEL allowed us to distribute the information in columns in such a way that the first one displayed the context before the mark of punctuation, the second the punctuation mark itself, the third the subsequent context, and in the fourth column the references were accordingly shown. Therefore, this technique eased the automatic ordering of the instances according to the third column, containing the text after the punctuation symbol. This grouping was eventually timesaving for the task of classifying the instances, as it allowed us to arrange automatically many coordinate and subordinate clauses, especially relative clauses and those of time, condition, etc. All the others, in turn, had to be grouped manually.

## 4. Inventory of marks of punctuation

The number and variety of marks of punctuation in a given text depends not only on the period in which the text was written, but also on the individual author. This is the reason why *The Old English Apollonius of Tyre* and *The Gospel according to Saint Mark* (Obegi Gallardo

2004), for instance, present a different inventory of punctuation symbols, in spite of being late Anglo-Saxon compositions. In the former, the *punctus* is the only punctuation symbol used by the scribe (Calle and Miranda 2005b) whereas in the latter we find the *punctus,* the *punctus versus* and the *punctus elevatus*. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that chapters I through V show the presence of the three marks of punctuation; however, in chapters VI-XVI the use of both the *punctus versus* and the *punctus elevatus* is much more prominent than the *punctus*, possibly due to the existence of different hands working on the same text.

As regards the inventory of punctuation marks found in MS Cambridge L1.4.14, it presents four different marks of punctuation:

a) The *punctus* (·), always in raised position. The *punctus* is the most frequent mark of punctuation in MS Cambridge Ll. 4.14. Apart from the uses of this punctuation mark to express linguistic relations, it is always placed both to introduce and circumscribe Roman and Arabic numbers, so as not to confuse the numbers with the letters that circumscribe them.

b) The double *punctus* (:), or colon. The lower point of this mark is usually written over the ruling, while the higher one has a supra-linear position.

c) The *paragraph mark* (represented here by ¶).

d) The *virgula suspensiva* (/), or *virgule*, consisting in a slanting bar or slash. This sometimes appears in pairs (//), in combination with the *punctus*, either (/.) or (\.), or even with the double *punctus* (/:) and (\), coinciding with the uses and functions of the slash when it appears in isolation.

As mentioned above, the text was primarily written for those involved in the study of the astrolabe; therefore, given that silent reading is implied, grammatical punctuation may be expected to predominate in this text, though particular uses of rhetorical punctuation are also found. From a linguistic point of view, punctuation has been found to have a fourfold function, that is, to express textual, sentential, clausal and phrasal relationships.

### 4.1. Marks of punctuation at textual level

Both the *virgule* and the *paragraph mark* are mainly used at the macro-structural level to separate the different sections and subsections of the text. The full stop would then be the most appropriate rendering in modern punctuation. Note that the scribe frequently uses a capital letter in order to further emphasize the change of topic and act as a kind of sub-title. See the following examples:

(1)  The · 4 · signe is Cancer and he regneþ in Iuil and is clepid *þe* signe of *þe* Crawe · or ellis of þe kanker *þat* is aworme ffor as moche as job was lepre and ffull*e* of cankris by þe sonde of god · who so ys borne in thys signe shall*e* be ffeblee · but he shall*e* haue grace in pa*ra*dise / (f. 153ʳ, 37-40).

(2)  <u>Now of þe eyne þe significacio*n*is//</u> grette eyne and rounde · *and* glauk bitokeneth ama*n* malancoliouse [...] (f. 158ᵛ, 37-38).

(3)  ¶ The lyfte eye more þan þe ryth · betokeneth ama*n* gay · and ffayr of spekynge · in sownynge *and* trauesinge moche ¶ <u>The significa-ciois of þe nose</u> ¶ Anose moche bocchy bytokeneth aman moche dronkelew · gloton · (f. 159ʳ, 35-38).

### 4.2. Marks of punctuation at sentence level

Punctuation symbols are used here to indicate the relationship between sentences and clauses. Unsurprisingly, the writer of MS Cambridge L1.4.14, like the scribes of other manuscripts of the period (Arakelian 1975: 617; Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 2005a) shows a notion of the sentence which is different from that of Present-Day English; indeed, there is a constant worry about sentence boundaries, a fact leading him to punctuate regardless of the type of sentence/clause involved. Four functions of sentence-level punctuation are given below.

a)  *To mark off non-finite forms of the verb*: there is a constant use of the *punctus* and the *virgule* before non-finite forms of verbs, especially before present participles. Since there is no need to make any kind of pause, this may be explained as the scribe's intention to mark off a particular kind of grammatical relationship. Both marks of punctuation are here devices to link the present participle with its subject,

which usually appears before in the utterance. In light of this, no mark of punctuation is necessary in Present-Day English. See, for instance, the following examples of the *punctus* and the *virgule* respectively:

(4)    An heed eue*r*longe in *þe* schewyng partie · betokeneth ama*n* of scharp witte · doynge many vnwyslyche and lyght · menable (f. 158ʳ, 3-4).

(5)    And ffrist it is to knowe þat *þe* day naturall*e* bygynnyth in þe morwenynge of þe day next / suwynge and he hath · 29 · houris and iche planete regneth · 3 · houris [...] (f. 155ʳ, 22-23).

b) *To introduce coordinate clauses*: the *punctus*, the *virgule* and the *paragraph mark* are also used to signal paratactic coordination, especially with *and* and *but*. The function is grammatical because the symbol is used to link clauses. In modern punctuation, it is not necessary to include any mark of punctuation. See the following instances:

(6)    [...] þe sterris *þe* planetis and þe elementis beth enffecte and corrupte ¶ And by þis cause sume beth good *and* Sume euell*e* (f. 154ʳ, 16-18).

(7)    In þe whiche sat*ernus* dwellith and goth aboute at onys in 30 · wynter ¶ And sat*er*ne is aplanete maliciouse *and* wickid · cold and drie · and þer ffor he is sette heigest of all his ffellawis (f. 154ʳ, 34-36).

In these examples, we also observe that the scribe makes use of a capital letter on the copulative conjunction *and* to begin a new statement, regardless of the type of clause involved, even though it is not necessary as both (6) and (7) could be printed as separate sentences in PDE; moreover, each clause has its own subject.

c) *To introduce subordinate clauses*: the *punctus* is also used to establish a relationship between the main and the subordinate clause, be it nominal, adjectival or adverbial. The primary function of the *punctus* would again be grammatical so as to separate the bounds of the main and the subordinate clauses.

1. To introduce nominal clauses: *that*-clauses are often preceded by a reporting verb which has been punctuated probably due to the writer's concern about delimiting all the clauses. Therefore, the function is grammatical because there is no need to pause before a nominal clause: hence, in a modernized edition there would be no need to punctuate such nominal clauses. See the instances below:

> (8) And þer ffor y · saye no by rewle · þat it ffallith not / be estima-cion and ffor as moche as yche ma*n* may not haue þe astrolabe (f. 155<sup>r</sup>, 26-27).

2. To introduce adjectival clauses: both defining and non-defining relative clauses are found, in most cases following the antecedent. The scribe does not differentiate them, as they are equally punctuated regardless of their restrictive or non-restrictive nature. In the case of non-restrictive clauses, the function is mainly grammatical, as the *punctus* links relative clauses with their corresponding antecedent, and rhetorical, because an implicit pause is present. In the case of restrictive clauses, the punctuation has only a grammatical function. If modernized, defining relative clauses do not need any mark of punctuation, whereas non-defining ones are yielded between commas.

> (9) [...] þat heuene is rounde in þe man of merid spere · in þe myddis of wyche hangyth þe erthe of acentre of all*e* þe world (f. 154<sup>r</sup>, 24-26).
>
> (10) [...] and a planete is to saie asterre · wyche is discordaunt / ffrom oþ*er* sterris (f. 153<sup>r</sup>, 20-21).

Even though the punctus is the symbol that is frequently employed to express this type of relationship, the *virgule* and the *paragraph mark* may also appear, as in the following instances:

> (11) […] erth is round as an appull*e* as all*e* oþ*er* beth ¶ In þe myddis of þe wyche erthe is þe pitte of helle rith as þe blake [...] (f. 154<sup>v</sup>, 33-34).
>
> (12) Now it is to vndyrstande þat e*very* man leuynge here in erthe hath · 9 · complexc*ion*is whiche bithe in him þat is to saye Colre · San-guyne · ffleume and malancolie / w*ith* out whiche he may not lyne / ne*ver* þe lat*ter* if ever m*an* haue alle þese · 9 · ȝit hath (f. 155<sup>r</sup>, 2-3).

3. To introduce adverbial clauses: the *punctus* also introduces all types of adverbial subordination, especially those of condition, cause, concession, purpose, time and contrast. See the following instances:

(13) […] it is vndir þe constellacion · of whome batellus kyngis he borne cursinge ama*n* · shall*e* be þat is borne vndir him · and mys-seledinge and sley · ffor þey wull*e* gladely disceyne and þei [...] (f. 156ʳ, 27-28).

(14) ¶ And þan answerid þe o*þer* philisophre and said þat god made all*e* þing good in here kynde w*ith* oute ffauȝte and lacke · as þe planetis *and* þe sterres *and* þe elementis þe montheȝ and þe daieȝ · ma*n* and beste and all*e* o*þer* þingȝ be neþ*e* hem (f.154ʳ, 6-8).

Sometimes, adverbial clauses are fronted to highlight the information of the subordinate clause over the main one, as in the following examples:

(15) ¶ And sat*ern*e is aplanete maliciouse *and* wickid · cold and drie · and *þer* ffor he is sette heigest of all his ffellawis · ffor if he flode lowest as þe mone dothe · he shulde distroie ma*n* and best · and all*e* þat were yfformed growynge vppon þe cythe […] (f. 154ʳ, 35-38).

(16) it is to witte also þat if þe planete regne not retrogard as it is to ffor said · þan myght þey neu*er* be made eve*n* as by here course [...] (f. 155ᵛ, 7-9).

The comma would be the most appropriate counterpart in some cases, for example in conditional clauses, and no mark of punctuation would be found, for instance, in the case of causal clauses.

d) T*o separate structurally-independent clauses*: the *punctus* and the *virgule* introduce a new clause which deals with a different topic from the preceding one, so they are used exclusively to signal a change of topic. Both the grammatical and the rhetorical functions are present here, as these marks of punctuation inform the reader of the end of the clause, so that the appropriate intonation may be applied. The full stop or semi-colon would be the most suitable modern counterparts. See the following examples:

(17) The artificiall*e* day lasteþ ffro þe sonne rise · till*e* þe sonne sette ·

The natural*e* day lastiþ · 24 houris · *þæt* is to say all*e* þe nyȝth and all*e* þe day · it is to witte also *þæt* if þe planete regne not ret- rogard [...] (f. 155ᵛ, 6-8).

(18) [...] · and regneþ as longe tyme as it is to fforsaid / aft*er*ward reg- neth venus as longe (f. 155ʳ, 29-30).

e) *To mark off connectors of sentences*: the *punctus* (13%), the *para- graph mark* (5%) and the *virgule* (5%) are sometimes found before and/or after logical connectors, such as *þer ffor, neþeles, afterwarde*, among others, though the preceding position generally predominates. The function would be grammatical as these marks of punctuation are marking off the beginning of a new clause but, at the same time, it marks a pause therein. Today, the comma would be the most ap- propriate mark of punctuation. See the examples below:

(19) [...] it hath aserteyne and oþ*er* disposicions of lymys schewith adeseynable ymage of signes · neþeles þe doctrine of pawmystrie is wonte to enserche (f. 157ᵛ, 26-27).

(20) These ben Certeine donnis of qualitis in þe wyche no ma*n* may be disceyned · ffor soþe in þe disposiscion of þe oþer lymas is I wonte to be lettinge of discrecion ¶ Neþerles · þese ffore demeth hem not / þer ffor awyse phisonomyer · shuld be ware · to deme · but if he can p*ro*seyne [...] (f. 158ʳ, 26-29).

## 4.3. Marks of punctuation at clause level

Apart from the expression of sentential relationships, the writer em- ploys punctuation marks to mark off all kinds of relations within the clause, that is, to separate clause constituents (the subject and the verb, the verb and its complement, etc.), to enumerate, to introduce coordi- nate phrases, appositions, etc. Each of these uses is accounted for be- low.

a) *To separate the clause constituents*: both the *punctus* (5%) and the *virgule* (10%) are used at clause level to separate the subject and the verb, the verb and its complements (direct object, indirect object, prepositional complement, etc.), or two or more noun phrases, among others. In Present-Day English, the use of a punctuation mark is not necessary. See the following examples:

(21) [...] and it is clepid þe signe of abalance ffor as moche as judas schariot / made his conseyl w*ith* þe juwes and graunted hem þat þy shulde take (f. 153ᵛ, 8-9).

(22) [...] in þat signe god made þe world and þis signe aries \ is cleped þe signe of þe Ram (f. 153ʳ, 26-27).

(23) [...] ffor þe day is no þinge but þe spredinge of þe sonne /· vppon erthe ffor þe philosopre seith · þat men may not / come fforthe [...] (f. 156ʳ, 10-11).

b) *To signal the coordination of phrases*: the function of the *punctus* here is mainly grammatical, as it marks off the different phrases; a comma would be the most appropriate present-day rendering.

(24) […] heere þ*at* is ruffe þicke · *and* riȝth betokeneth · ama*n* gretteliche acursid pront lyght of wyll*e* · envious · and malicious seynable (f. 158ʳ, 39-40).

c) *To enumerate* (the *punctus* and the *paragraph mark*): in this case, both the grammatical (to signal each of the enumerated items within a clause) and the rhetorical (a necessary pause between them) sides of punctuation are present. If modernized, the comma would be the most suitable counterpart.

(25) In þe hieste heuene whyche beth menable þ*at* is to saye · Aries · Taurus · Gemini · Cancer · leo · virgo · (f. 153ʳ, 14-15).

(26) ¶ *þe* · 2 · saturnus and is euell*e* ¶ þe · 3 · is Iupit*er* and is good ¶ þe · 4 · mars · and is euell*e* ¶ The 5 · is soll*e* and is good ¶ The · 6 · is benus and is good ¶ The 7 · is mercurius / · and is yuell*e* ¶ The · 8 · hour is luna and is good ¶ The 9 · is saturn and is yuell*e* ¶ The · 10 · is Iupit*er* and is good ¶ The · 11 · is mars and is yuell*e* ¶ The 12 · is sol · and is good ¶ The ffrist hour of þe nyhth suwinge is benus ¶ þe 2 · mercurie · ¶ þe 12 · mercurie · ¶ þe · 3 · luna ¶ þe · 4 · saturnus ¶ þe · 5 · Iupit*er* ¶ *þe* · 6 mars ¶ *þe* · 7 · sol ¶ *þe* · 8 · benus ¶ *þe* 9 · mercurius ¶ þe 10 · luna ¶ *þe* · 11 · saturn*us* ¶ þe · 12 · Iupit*er* (f. 155ᵛ, 24-31).

d) *To mark off the members of a comparison*: the primary use of the *punctus* and the *virgule* here is to mark off the members of a comparison, so the basic function would be grammatical. If modernized, there is no need to use any mark of punctuation. See the following instances:

(27) [...] and *þat* syght shall*e* be more þeyne vn to þam · þan alle þe
þeynes of helle (f. 154ᵛ, 38-39).

(28) [...] aft*er*ward regneth venus as longe · than m*er*curie · as longe
þan *þe* mone as longe / · than sat*er*nus as longe · þan Iupiter as
longe · þan mars as longe [...] (f. 155ʳ, 30-32).

e) *To introduce appositional phrases*: the *punctus* is used here to cir-
cumscribe appositions. Therefore, both the grammatical and the
rhetorical functions are present as the mark is used to separate the
apposition from the rest of the sentence, and a minor pause is also
implied. A comma would be the most appropriate modern counter-
part in this case, as in the following example:

(29) [...] in þat lond was an Englissh ma*n* · ffull*e* wyse and well*e* vndir-
standynge of philosophie and astronomye · studied and compylid
þis boke out of [...] (f. 153ʳ, 1-4).

f) *To show the fronting of a constituent*: as shown in (30), the attribute
*oþer moche fflaterrer* is separated from the other constituents to
avoid any possible ambiguity. Therefore, the function is grammatical
and no mark of punctuation would be needed in modern rendering.

(30) A longe fface betokeneth apronte ma*n* · noble of witte · and of
wille · bostinge more of him self · þan of oþ*er* moche fflaterrer ·
he is (f. 158ᵛ, 22-23).

g) *To call attention to what follows*: in this case, the scribe is trying to
emphasize a piece of information, so the function of the *punctus* here
would be both grammatical and rhetorical. In this fashion, an equiva-
lent in modern editions could be the comma or the colon.

(31) [...] and it is to vndirstande *þat* þer beth two man*er* of daieʒ · þe
day natural*le* and þe day artificial*le* (f. 155ᵛ, 4-5).

(32) The tokenes of þe sonne in aman*n*ys body · ben þese · aclere fface
and aredy amene mouþ*e* · lippis reed and su*m* dell*e* boluynge *and*
all*e* þe bodi well*e* schapen (f. 156ʳ, 16-17).

Note, however, that the *paragraph mark* and the *double punctus* may
seldom appear in the same cases, as in the following instances:

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(33) And þese · 4 · complexicio*n*is in alle þingis ben acordinge in kyn-
de to þe · 9 · elementis ¶ That is to say ffrist complexcion ys Colre
and it is in kynde hote and drie acordynge to þe element of ffyre
[...] (f. 155ʳ, 10-12).

(34) And if it be citrine: it betokeneth ama*n* swhyche meke · and large
kepinge · p*er*ffithliche ffellawschepe and stedeffaste (f. 157ᵛ, 39-
40).

h) *To circumscribe a Latin expression*: the *paragraph mark* and the *vir-
gule* are employed here to mark off a group of Latin words in order
to distinguish them from the English text. In this particular case, no
mark of punctuation would be necessary in modern punctuation.

(35) The · 9 · heuene is clepid in latyn ¶ <u>Cristallu*m* vel applanes</u> ¶ þat is
vnmonable (f. 154ʳ, 30).

(36) and þat spere is menable and it is clepid also in latyn ¶ <u>primum
mobile</u> ¶ of þe whiche philisophres ffyndyn (f. 154ʳ, 32).

## 4.4. Marks of punctuation at phrase level

The *punctus* and the *virgule* are used to circumscribe numerals or to
link elements of the phrase, for instance, a preposition and its comple-
ment, a negative adverb and the verb, a determiner and a noun, etc. In
these cases, no mark of punctuation is needed in Present-day English.

(37) And it is to vndirstande þat þer beth · 11 · heuenes and · 9 · ordris
of angelis and af*ter* þe day of dome þer · shall*e* be · 10 · ordris · as
it was at þe bigynnynge whan god made hem (f. 153ʳ, 10-12).

## 5. Conclusions

The nature of the ME punctuation system has become the object of
closer investigation in the last decade. As mentioned in the introduction,
medieval punctuation has been traditionally considered as haphazard,
mostly used at the writer's whim (Jenkinson 1926: 154; Arakelian 1975:
623). In line with other previous investigations (Rodríguez-Álvarez
1998; 1999; Alonso-Almeida 2002, Esteban Segura 2005), the main
conclusion that can be drawn is that the punctuation system of this man-

uscript is not arbitrary. Even though the overlapping of symbols seems to be the rule, such symbols can be demonstrated to share specific uses, many of them co-occurring in the same contexts. In light of this, the *punctus* shows the highest frequency within this treatise with 1,260 instances, used at the sentential, clausal and phrasal levels, and followed by the *paragraph mark* (205), the *virgule* (152) and the double *punctus* (4). The *paragraph mark*, in turn, is mainly employed to separate the different sections within the treatise, and its uses often overlap with those of the *punctus*. The position of marks in the treatise is also syntactically relevant, since they delimit sentences as well as other sense-units; that is, punctuation plays a role within the text, helping to identify sentences and indicating syntactic relationships. In cases in which spoken requirements and syntactic sense are fully met, both the grammatical and the rhetorical functions are present. These motivations "follow from a desire a) to clarify the way in which items within the sentence should be combined in order to fully understand the message, and b) to show the way in which the text should be read in order to weigh the value of the information given" (Alonso-Almeida 2002: 229).

Concerning the controversy set forth in the introduction about whether to modernize punctuation when editing medieval texts or, on the contrary, to preserve the original punctuation, the latter is normally the best choice, as it allows a more in-depth study of punctuation patterns and writing style in the Middle Ages. According to Lass "the ideal model for a corpus or any presentation of a historical text is an archaeological site or a crime-scene: no contamination, explicit stratigraphy, and an immaculately preserved chain of custody" (2004: 46). However, when we need to modernize, we propose the selection of a modern equivalent based on the specific use and functions of each mark of punctuation, as this may increase our awareness of contemporary textual practices. As Heyworth states:

> This lack of awareness of punctuation marks […], together with the modern treatment of them as little more than a convenience in reading […], may account for present standards in editorial punctuation which would be tolerated in no other branch of medieval text-critical studies (1981: 140).[2]

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[2]  See also Calle-Martín and Miranda-García (2005b).

However, it is important to mention the fact that "medieval punctuation is still a subject about which comparatively little is known" (Lucas 1971: 1), "a field very rich, but whose riches are widely scattered and difficult to discern" (Jenkinson 1926: 153). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze medieval texts thoroughly in order to obtain more details about the marks of punctuation used. As Calle-Martín argues, "diplomatic editions are actually a need so as to offer an accurate rendering of the text, the more reliable the better, and thus avoid unnecessary modifications at the hand of the editor" (2004: 421). In fact, this may allow us to study medieval punctuation practice from a diachronic point of view and, in addition, to improve our knowledge of the ways in which medieval scribes performed their work.

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