La punteggiatura nel Medio Inglese è un tema che ha ricevuto scarsa attenzione accademica fino alla fine del Novecento, a causa della sua apparente arbitrarità 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 Ll.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 L.1.4.14, 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 L.1.4.14. 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 regne\p in Iuil and is clepid \pe signe of \pe Crawe · or ellis of \pe kanker \pat is oworne \ffor as moche as job was lepre and \ffulle of cankris by \pe sonde of god · who so ys borne in thys signe shalle be \ffieblee · but he shalle haue grace in paradise / (f. 153\b, 37-40).
2. Now of \pe eyne \pe significacionis// grette eyne and rounde · and glauck bitokeneth aman malancoliouse [...] (f. 158\b, 37-38).
3. ¶ The lyfte eye more \phan \pe ryth · betokeneth aman gay · and \ffayr of spekynge · in sownynge and trauesinge moche ¶ The signification of \pe nose ¶ Anose moche bocchy bytokeneth aman moche dronkelew · gloton · (f. 159\b, 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; Cille-Martin 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 euerlonge in *he* schewyng partie · betokeneth aman of 
scharp witte · doynge many vnwyslyche and lyght · menable (f. 
158v, 3-4).

(5) And ffrist it is to knowe þat *he* day naturalle bygynyth in þe mor-
wenyne of þe day next / suwynge and he hath · 29 · houris and 
iche planete regneth · 3 · houris [...] (f. 155v, 22-23).

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

(6) [...] *he* sterris *he* planetis and *he* elementis beth enfecte and cor-
rupte ¶ And by *his* cause sume beth good *and* Sume euelle (f. 
154r, 16-18).

(7) In *he* whiche saterneus dwellyth and goth aboute at onys in 30 · 
wynter ¶ And saterne is aplanete maliciouse *and* wicke · cold and 
drie · and *per* ffor he is sette heigest of all his ffellawis (f. 154v, 
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 state-
ment, 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 estab-
lish 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 *per ffor y* · saye no by rewle · *hat it ffallith not* / be estimation and ffor as moche as yche man may not haue *he astrolabe* (f. 155r, 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) [...] *hat heuene is rounde in he man of merid spere* · in *he myddis of wyche hangyth he erthe of acentre of alle he world* (f. 154r, 24-26).
(10) [...] and a planete is to saie asterre · wyche is discordaunt / ffom o*per* sterris (f. 153v, 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 appulle as alle *o*per beth ¶ In *he myddis of he wyche erthe is he pitte of helle rith as he blake [...] (f. 154v, 33-34).
(12) Now it is to vndyrstande *hat every man leuynge here in erthe hath* · 9 · complexiconis whiche bithe in him *hat is to saye Colre · San· guyne · fleume and malancolie / with out whiche he may not lyne / never he latt if ever man haue alle *hese* · 9 · 3it hath (f. 155r, 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 aman · shalle be *hat* is borne vndir him · and mysseledinge and sley · ffor þey wulle gladely disceyne and þei [...] (f. 156r, 27-28).

(14) ¶ And þan answerid þe oþer philisophre and said *hat* god made alle þing good in here kynde with oute fflauȝte and lacke · as þe planetis and þe sterres and þe elementis þe montheȝ and þe daieȝ · man and beste and alle oþer þingȝ be neþe 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 saterne is aplanete maliciouse and wickid · cold and dreie · and ffor he is sette heigest of all his fflawlis · ffor if he flode lowest as þe mone dothe · he shulde distroie man and best · and alle *hat* were yfformed growynge vpon þe cythe [...] (f. 154r, 35-38).

(16) it is to wittie also *hat* if þe planete regne not retrogard as it is to ffor said · þan myght þey neuer be made even as by here course [...] (f. 155r, 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) To 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 artificialle day lasteþ ffrø þe sonne rise · tille þe sonne sette ·
The naturalle day lasteth 24 hours. *beth* is to say alle he nyght and alle he day it is to witte also *beth* if he planete regne not retrogard [...] (f. 155v, 6-8).

(18) [...] and regne as longe tyme as it is to ffor said / afterward regneth venus as longe (f. 155v, 29-30).

e) To mark off connectors of sentences: the *punctus* (13%), the *paragraph mark* (5%) and the *virgule* (5%) are sometimes found before and/or after logical connectors, such as *per ffor, nepeles, 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 appropriate mark of punctuation. See the examples below:

(19) [...] it hath aserteyne and oher disposicions of lymys schewith adeseynayle ymage of signes · nepeles he doctrine of pawmystrie is wonte to enserche (f. 157v, 26-27).

(20) These ben Certeine donnis of qualitis in he wyche no man may be disceyned · ffor sohe in pe disposicion of he oher lymas is I wonte to be lettinge of discreckion ¶ Neperles · these ffore demeth hem not / per ffor awyse phisonsomerye · shuld be ware · to deme · but if he can proseyne [...] (f. 158r, 26-29).

4.3. Marks of punctuation at clause level

Apart from the expression of sentential relationships, the writer employs 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 coordinate phrases, appositions, etc. Each of these uses is accounted for below.

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:

108
(21) [...] and it is clepid \textit{he} signe of abalance for as moche as judas chariot / made his conseyl with \textit{he} juwes and granted hem \textit{hat} by shulde take (f. 153v, 8-9).

(22) [...] in \textit{hat} signe god made \textit{he} world and \textit{his} signe aries \ is cleped \textit{be} signe of \textit{be} Ram (f. 153v, 26-27).

(23) [...] for \textit{he} day is no ping but \textit{he} spredinge of \textit{be} sonne / vpon erthe for \textit{be} philosophre seith \textit{hat} men may not / come fforthe [...] (f. 156v, 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 \textit{hat} is ruffe \textit{cke} \textit{and} ri\textit{th} betokeneth \textit{aman} gret-teliche acusid pront lyght of wylle \textit{envious} \textit{and} malicious seyn-able (f. 158v, 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 \textit{he} hieste heuen whyche beth menable \textit{hat} is to seye \textit{Aries} \textit{Taurus} \textit{Gemini} \textit{Cancer} \textit{leo} \textit{virgo} (f. 153v, 14-15).

(26) \textit{he} 2 \textit{saturnus} and is euelle \textit{he} 3 \textit{is} \textit{lupiter} and is good \textit{he} 4 \textit{mars} \textit{and} is euelle \textit{he} 5 \textit{is} solle \textit{and} is good \textit{he} 6 \textit{is} benus \textit{and} is good \textit{he} 7 \textit{is} mercurius / \textit{and} is yuelle \textit{he} 8 \textit{hour} is luna \textit{and} is good \textit{he} 9 \textit{is} saturn and \textit{is} yuelle \textit{he} 10 \textit{is} lupiter \textit{and} is good \textit{he} 11 \textit{is} mars \textit{and} is yuelle \textit{he} 12 \textit{is} sol \textit{and} is good \textit{he} 13 \textit{frist hour} of \textit{he} nytht suwinge is benus \textit{he} 12 \textit{mercurie} \textit{he} 13 \textit{luna} \textit{he} 4 \textit{sat}-

urnus \textit{he} 5 \textit{lupiter} \textit{he} 6 \textit{mars} \textit{he} 7 \textit{sol} \textit{he} 8 \textit{benus} \textit{he} 9 \textit{mercurius} \textit{he} 10 \textit{luna} \textit{he} 11 \textit{saturnus} \textit{he} 12 \textit{Lupiter} (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 hat syght shalle be more þeyne vn to þam · þan alle þe þeynes of helle (f. 154v, 38-39).
(28) [...] afterward regneth venus as longe · than mercurie · as longe þan he mone as longe / · than saternus as longe · þan lupiter as longe · þan mars as longe [...] (f. 155r, 30-32).

e) To introduce appositional phrases: the punctus is used here to circumscribe 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 counterpart in this case, as in the following example:

(29) [...] in þat lond was an Englishsh man · ffulle wyse and welle vndirstandynge 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 over 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 man · noble of witte · and of wille · bostinge more of him self · þan of over 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 equivalent in modern editions could be the comma or the colon.

(31) [...] and it is to vndirstande hat þer beth two maner of daieg · þe day naturalle and þe day artificialle (f. 155v, 4-5).
(32) The tokenes of þe sonne in amannys body · ben þese · aclere fface and aredy amene mouþe · lippis reed and sum delle boluynge and alle þe bodi welle schapen (f. 156v, 16-17).

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

110
(33) And þese · 4 · complexionis in alle þingis ben acordinge in kynde to þe · 9 · elementis ¶ That is to say ffirist complexion ys Colre and it is in kynde hote and drie acordyne to þe element of ffyre […] (f. 155v, 10-12).

(34) And if it be citrine: it betokeneth aman swyche meke · and large kepinge · perfithliche ffellawschepe and stedeffaste (f. 157v, 39-40).

h) To circumscribe a Latin expression: the paragraph mark and the virgule 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 ¶ Cristallum vel applanes ¶ hat is vnmonable (f. 154r, 30).

(36) and þat spere is menable and it is clepid also in latyn ¶ primum mobile ¶ 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 complement, 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 ðer · 11 · heuenes and · 9 · ordris of angelis and after þe day of dome ðer · shalle be · 10 · ordris · as it was at þe bigynnynge when 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 1995: 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).\(^2\)

\(^2\) 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.

References


113


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