THE PURPOSE OF THIS SECTION is to give concrete advice on how to transcribe, both generally and more particularly given that Middle English poses several field-specific problems in transcription and uses several now-archaic letter forms. This section assumes no knowledge of manuscript studies; all specialist terminology here has been printed in boldface, indicating its inclusion in the “Glossary to Key Manuscript Terminology.”

The manuscript with the shelfmark London, British Library, ms Arundel 292 is written in a clear, simple hand (see fig. 71) and in a script known as Gothic Textura rotunda, one of four types of Textura, an important bookhand of late medieval England (the Jesus College Owl and the Nightingale manuscript and the Gawain manuscript, for instance, are also written in this hand). Rotunda is the least formal of the four Textura scripts and gets its name from the fact that there are fewer breaks (that is, lifts of the pen to change direction) in the formation of letters. These tend to be more rounded than those in the other three types of Textura (see front plates 1, 2, and 6 respectively, and descriptions). Rotunda is also simpler because the tips and ends of letter forms do not have serifs, that is, lozenge-shaped decorative finishes (compare front plates 1 and 6 below).

ms Arundel 292 is simple to read paleographically, but its Early Middle English texts contain a wide range of archaic letter forms, some of which date back to the Anglo-Saxon period. It was in the Norwich Cathedral Library in the fourteenth century, and much of it is in Latin, but it has three unique alliterative Middle English works, each independently entered in the manuscript over a period of some one hundred and fifty years (see ch. 1, sec. 1 below). The manuscript also opens with a copy of the Cree in deum (Credo) and the Peter Noster (Lord’s Prayer) in Early Middle English (pictured in fig. 71), texts so central to lay culture that it would be hard to find a more basic entry point to vernacular manuscript studies of the period. Notice in fig. 71 that the first letter of every line has been splashed in red for emphasis by the rubricator, and that rubricated titles of the Credo in deum and Peter Noster appear in the margin with paraph marks (shaped like a capital C). Beside the titles in red one can see fainter, abbreviated versions of the titles in the extreme right-hand margin: these were written as instructions to the rubricator, left by the scribe to show where and what to put in the red titles. Above the text a large “C. X.” can be seen: this is the medieval press-mark for Norwich Cathedral Library, showing, that is, where the book would have been shelved in the cathedral library, just as today a library book has a call number.

The first four lines of the poetic texts of Credo and the Peter Noster are transcribed below alongside quotations from the modern EETS edition of these texts. Comparing these will show the difference between an edition and a transcription. For a guide to recording abbreviations, omissions, additions, deletions and other challenges in transcribing, see the “Note on Transcriptions and Transcription Symbols” for the basic rules that govern transcriptions in this book and commonly in the field of Middle English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EETS EDITION</th>
<th>TRANSCRIPTION OF ARUNDEL 292, FOL. 3</th>
<th>MARGINAL RUBRICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I leue in Godd al michten fader,</td>
<td>I leue in godd al michten fader.</td>
<td>¶ Credo in deum. [in red],</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dätt heuene &amp; erē made to gar,</td>
<td>dätt heuene and erē made to gar</td>
<td>Credo [in faint brown ink, an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; in theu Crist his leue Sun</td>
<td>and in theu crist his leue sun</td>
<td>instruction to the rubricator in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vre onelic louerd ík him mun.</td>
<td>Vre onelic louerd ík him mun.</td>
<td>extreme right margin]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Credo, fol. 3, 1-4)</td>
<td>(Credo, fol. 3, 1-4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fader ure dāt art in heuene blisse,</td>
<td>Fader ure dāt art in heueneblisse</td>
<td>¶ Peter noster. [in red],</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dīn heȝe name, jî wurde bliceald; Cumen itt mote dī kingdom;</td>
<td>Dīn heȝe name jî purde bliceald; Cumen itt mote dī kingdom;</td>
<td>Peter Noster [in faint brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dīn hali wil, ìt be al don. (Peter Noster, folns. 3-35, lines 23-26)]</td>
<td>Dīn hali wil, ìt be al don.</td>
<td>ink, instruction to rubricator in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>extreme right margin]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I. Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem.

T. Paternoster. Amen.
BARE ESSENTIALS 1: A Transcription Is Not an Edition

A transcription seeks to record exactly what is on the page of the manuscript; an edition aims to create a readable text for modern scholars. Even though an edition will usually reflect the original spelling of a text, its editor has created the published text by comparing different copies or versions (where they exist), correcting obvious scribal mistakes (e.g., supplying missing words and deleting repeated words), and emending where necessary to make sense out of grammatical nonsense. A transcription, however, is mainly concerned with recording exactly what the scribe has written on a particular page—including any mistakes, however obvious, he or she made. A transcription is unique to a given manuscript.

Notice the differences between the transcription and the edition in fig. 11 and the chart above: the modern edition of these Arundel texts expands abbreviations silently while the transcription italicizes expansions to show what the transcriber added (e.g., "Ihsu" in Credo, line 3; or "in," in the first line of the Pater Noster). Middle English scholars always italicize abbreviations when they expand them: unlike Latin, Middle English has no fixed spelling system and differs greatly across dialect areas. So, for instance, the heavily abbreviated Latin words in the instruction to the rubricator reading "Pater noster" [our Father] technically do not need to be represented with italics showing how they are expanded because there is only one way to spell these words in Latin. (The italics are used here to help beginning students.) In Middle English, however, even a simple word like "in," often but not always written with an i and an abbreviation bar on top, can be spelled out in multiple ways (such as "ine," "hin," or "jn" depending on dialect or orthography). The expansion "ine" would provide an extra syllable, which could be important for the metrics of a poem, so italics tell the reader that this is the modern transcriber's choice of spelling. If the scribe has elsewhere spelled the word in full (as in the first line of the Credo), the transcriber should use that spelling, as I have here, but you will find that scribes are often inconsistent and will spell the same word multiple ways. Abbreviations for silent e are especially tricky. In verse they can matter metrically, in alliterative poetry or prose less so; often a sign for an abbreviation can be difficult to distinguish from a decorative flourish; the latter are called otiose strokes and are signaled in transcription with an apostrophe (see "Note on Transcriptions and Transcription Symbols"). The front plates below present more complex examples.

Likely the comparative lack of abbreviation in this text is related to its being copied for pastoral purposes, which also makes it a handy learning text for modern students. The scribe had no need for these texts in English for himself, being quite capable of using the Latin (as we know from his copying elsewhere), but the fact that these are rhyming translations is another clue that they were meant for the semiliterate (for memorization). Note also that it can be difficult to tell whether a scribe intends a capital letter or not (e.g., the P in the instruction "Pater noster" instruction could be p), but since the rubricator (likely the scribe himself, judging by the hand) interpreted it as a capital, I have, too (the C of "Credo" is certainly a capital). These may seem like tiny questions, but the transcriber is responsible for representing the text as faithfully as possible, and in literary works, the question, however minute, may not be tiny if a matter of interpretation turns on it (see the example of "king dom" below).

In transcription of Middle English one normally preserves u and v distinctions, which are a feature of orthography—u can be a consonant and v can be a vowel in Middle English—but i and j variations tell us virtually nothing that is linguistically useful (often j will be used for the second i when double i is intended, so as to distinguish the double i from other minimis since i is often not dotted; double i can be mistaken for u or n, for example). The ers edition quoted above understandably substitutes w for the archaic letter wynn: p (e.g., "pil" for "wil" in the fourth line of the Pater Noster), but the transcription here preserves the original letter. A wynn in use at a late date like this is important linguistic and cultural information. The edition also

introduces normal word separation, where the transcription here chooses to retain the manuscript’s (see, for instance “heuenelblisse” in the first line of the *Pater Noster*). This last choice is optional for transcribers, who will more often choose to normalize syllable separation, as explained in the “Note on Transcriptions and Transcription Symbols,” but it can be done (as here) in order to offer fuller information about the scribe’s practices of orthography and dialect. It can also offer significant poetic information. For instance, “king dom” with its word separation intact in the third line of the *Pater Noster* preserves a richer, multivalent sense: the original Anglo-Saxon compound word “cynedom,” ending in “-dom” (a masculine abstract suffix meaning “state” or “power”) has now acquired in this Early Middle English usage a stronger and additional sense of “dom” as an independent word meaning “judgment” — much richer poetically for a translation of this famous prayer.

While the manuscript leaves a space between the first letter of each first word and the remainder of the letters, the edition elides this space to help modern readers (in fact, this kind of separation became increasingly less common later in the fourteenth century, as scribes moved more rapidly toward modern practice). My transcription here also normalizes the spacing between the first letter and the second at the beginning of each line (as is common practice), but in some different manuscript contexts one might want to retain the archaic spacing in a transcription, since it was sometimes exploited to showcase a mnemonic or an acrostic device in earlier poetic texts, at a time when such devices were in fashion, a technique that survives sporadically into the fourteenth century.²

². See, e.g., Roberts 2005, plate 35. Bodley Rolls 22, containing alliterative poetry likely meant for guild devotional use, is an example of Middle English verse that exploits first-letter acrostic devices as late as c. 1400. See Kennedy 2003, plate across from p. xi.

Late for its date is Arundel’s use of archaic letter forms such as eth, ð, or D (in uppercase), along with other letters that hark back to Anglo-Saxon orthography. In most manuscripts of the fourteenth century, Arundel’s “ðin” (thine) would be spelled “pin” (that is, with a thorn rather than an old-fashioned eth). Arundel also has, as we saw, the archaic wynn, þ (as in the word “pill” [will]). And there are two types of g forms, one of which, as Roberts notes, is clearly a yogh (ʒ): the second line of the *Pater Noster* (line 24 of fig. 11) has a word that looks like “hege” (high), but the form of the g differs from the g in, for instance, “king” (next line), so it should be transcribed “hege.” As Jane Roberts writes of the Arundel scribe:

The scribe generalizes ʒ, against the trend under way from the early eleventh century; and because he does not use þ, there is little possibility of misreading his p with its distinctive rectangular body. Unusually, he differentiates ʒ from g by using a final head-stroke only for the latter.”³


³. Ibid., 141, and see plate 34 and discussion.

Thorns and yoghs, as every student of Middle English knows, are in use well into the fifteenth century in many dialects, but the p and ð are very unusual by 1300. The Arundel scribe, then, provides a remarkable snapshot of a man teetering between two worlds. Not all the transcriptions in this book are quite this close, and most do not use so many archaic letter forms, but having encountered them here, the student of Middle English will at least know how to handle them and be alert to the possibility of archaisms. In the present instance, where it looks like the scribe is trying to indicate or preserve distinctions in pronunciation (of great interest to Middle English dialectologists), this kind of transcription does justice to his work.

In the front plates that follow, full transcriptions of pages of script are offered, along with descriptions of each hand and the manuscript context from which it comes. These are intended for preliminary practice, and advice on books and online sites with further examples for practice are given above, pp. xvi–xviii.
Preface

The Essay That Started a Field

It is not often that we can pinpoint the moment a new field begins to blossom, but in 1978 two scholars of Middle English paleography published an article with implications that would make Middle English manuscript studies mandatory for the larger literary world. In that year, A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes published “The Production of Copies of the Canterbury Tales and the Confessio Amantis in the Early Fifteenth Century.” Coauthorship, still not often practiced in the humanities, allowed them to see what likely neither of them could have seen alone: that among the five scribes who copied Cambridge, Trinity College, ms R.3.2 (hereafter, the Trinity Gower) in apparently prearranged pieces or stints, three were known elsewhere as prolific copyists of Middle English texts (Scribes B, D, and E; see front plates 4, 5, and 7). Moreover, no certain signs of supervision were evident in the manuscript, and disconnections strongly suggested that the scribes were not working together at one site. With the arrival of this single essay, long-held scholarly assumptions of commercial bookshops and vigilant supervision of working scribes crumbled on the spot. Since Middle English book production was still a relatively small, even niche, market circa 1400, these hands, already well known in that niche, working together on this particular project had to be more than coincidence. Suddenly we knew that scribes of Chaucer and Langland worked together (two poets whose audiences had been assumed by New Critical scholarship to be mutually exclusive); that, indeed, one man could copy both and Gower, too (Doyle and Parkes knew that their fourth scribe, Scribe D, had copied all three poets in the course of his career). Their second scribe, Scribe B, was already known as the copyist of the two most important extant Canterbury Tales manuscripts, Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth ms 392D (known as the Hengwrt ms) and San Marino, Huntington Library, ms III. 26 Cy (known as the Ellesmere ms). Moreover, Thomas Hoccleve himself, disciple of Chaucer and chief representative of the next generation of Middle English poets, deigned to copy alongside these scribes as E, albeit fecklessly.

Doyle and Parkes’s article, as revolutionary as it was and remains, is still really read only by specialists in codicology today. Many other articles and books of great importance have been published in Middle English codicology both before and especially after this landmark (see especially the materials listed below, including those identifying some of Doyle and Parkes’ scribes), but almost none of these reaches beyond a codicological readership today. The reasons are not far to seek: the language is specialized; the scholarship is buried in specialist journals or publications; manuscripts are geographically difficult of access; moreover, trends in literary theory at the end of the twentieth century too often relegated this kind of work to the dustbin of positivism without stopping to ask what it could contribute to interpretation. Times have changed.

And even geographical distances are being minimized as digital images of entire collections of manuscripts are mushrooming on the web. This book hopes to help make Middle English manuscript studies accessible to a wider audience by combining an introduction to its basic techniques with serious literary and cultural analysis.

How to Use this Book

There are three things one should know about this book. First, it is an introduction to manuscript studies in Middle English, not a survey. Our goal has been to use examples that typify what can be done with manuscript studies, not encompass it. Second, we have mainly chosen to highlight literary texts most often taught and the manuscripts that contain them. So, for instance, we focus heavily on the major Ricardian poets and women mystics, and we have consulted standard teaching anthologies in choosing shorter texts like lyrics or romances. Third, the book is written for sires of readers. The glossary, the front plates, and the “Bare Essentials” entries throughout “How to Transcribe Middle English” and chapter 1 are meant to introduce readers who are new to concepts and terminology in manuscript studies (e.g., chapter 3 teaches how to approach illustrations in literary texts). Some of the chapters and sections, meanwhile, model detailed analysis of a single codex, such as Linda Olson’s in-depth studies of key monastic manuscripts (chapter 6), where Middle English literature was read in relation to devotional works less known than the Ricardian poets. The range in the volume is quite deliberate and meant to accommodate the spectrum of readers now interested in Middle English manuscript studies, both new and advanced.
Manuscript studies is not paleography, though it uses paleography as a basic tool (much as, for instance, chemistry uses math). It is, rather, multidisciplinary, a mixture of codicology (the study of the whole codex), literary history, art history, textual criticism, dialect study, reception study, and the physical and social history of the book. Middle English manuscript studies, ideally, also illuminates and changes the literary analysis of texts, because it can shed light on how authors worked, what they seem to have cared about in the physical presentation of their writings, and what their first audiences cared about in the text's transmission. This book proceeds, then, often by in-depth analysis of selected manuscripts of the period's major authors and much-loved genres, not by surveys of every manuscript extant. The goal is to illuminate a manuscript, first by explaining its technicalities but ultimately also its literary or artistic achievements. This broad range in literary manuscript studies—from the technical to the artistically interpretive—is what makes it at once so challenging and so rich a field. It does require both specialized and interdisciplinary training, and our hope is that this book will open doors to the key concepts and methods for those new to the field, while at the same time offering some new insights into the manuscripts and texts discussed here for long-time codicologists, literary critics, and art historians.

Technical terms are defined in the glossary and printed in boldface throughout "How to Transcribe Middle English" and the glossary itself; fundamental methods and concepts (e.g., transcription, editing, dialect analysis) are introduced in the "Bare Essentials," sections that may be skipped over by more advanced readers. The "Note on Transcriptions and Transcription Symbols" explains in detail the standard principles of setting out transcriptions here. "How to Transcribe" and the front plates offer sample transcriptions and definitions of the scripts most commonly found in Middle English manuscripts between c. 1275 and 1540, together with brief commentary on the manuscript's history and typical features of decoration and layout (the kinds of things often not covered in straight paleography books).

For detailed paleography textbooks teaching Middle English transcription, the reader should consult Petti 1977, Rycraft 1973, Parkes 1979, Preston and Yeandle 1992, and Roberts 2005. These are listed below, along with sample recommendations for textbooks dealing with Latin manuscripts and their codicology. Also listed below are some classic items of background—and foreground—reading and the URLs of websites that are now revolutionizing and democratizing the field by making high-quality digital images of entire manuscripts available to the reader anywhere in the world. Items too recent for integration in this book are marked with an asterisk. They are testimony to the fast pace of this young field.

Kathryn Kerby-Fulton

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Corpus Christi College ms 198 (*Canterbury Tales*) http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=corpus&manuscript=ms198

Corpus Christi College ms 201 (*Piers*) http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=corpus&manuscript=ms201

Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library (searchable by author index for Chaucer, Hoccleve, Gower, Lydgate, and other Middle English writers; by title index for *Piers Plowman*, and other works; by scribe index for John Shirley, Hoccleve, and others) http://sunsite3.berkeley.edu/shesweb/authors.html

Auchinleck Manuscript (site mounted by the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh) http://www.nls.uk/auchinleck/

*Identification of the Scribes Responsible for Copying Major Works of Middle English Literature, website developed by Linne R. Mooney, Simon Horobin, and Estelle Stubbs, University of York, supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the UK, 2007–11 (mounted October 3, 2011, so not available to the present authors) http://www.medievalscribes.com/*