This extensive study of scribal correction in English manuscripts explores what correcting reveals about attitudes to books, language and literature in late medieval England. Daniel Wakelin surveys a range of manuscripts and genres, but focuses especially on poems by Chaucer, Hoccleve and Lydgate, and on prose works such as chronicles, religious instruction and practical lore. His materials are the variants and corrections found in manuscripts, phenomena usually studied only by editors or palaeographers, but his method is the close reading and interpretation typical of literary criticism. From the corrections emerge often overlooked aspects of English literary thinking in the late Middle Ages: scribes, readers and authors seek, though often fail to achieve, invariant copying, orderly spelling, precise diction, regular verse and textual completeness. Correcting reveals their impressive attention to scribal and literary craft – its rigour, subtlety, formalism and imaginativeness – in an age with little other literary criticism in English.

Daniel Wakelin is Jeremy Griffiths Professor of Medieval English Palaeography in the Faculty of English Language and Literature, University of Oxford, and a fellow of St Hilda’s College. He is the author of *Humanism, Reading and English Literature 1430–1530* (2007) and co-editor with Alexandra Gillespie of *The Production of Books in England 1350–1500* (Cambridge, 2011).
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SCRIBAL CORRECTION AND LITERARY CRAFT

English Manuscripts 1375–1510

DANIEL WAKELIN
Scribal correction and literary craft: English manuscripts 1375–1510

Daniel Wakelin

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Most importantly I must thank Joel Harvey who, when I long ago mentioned a manuscript with ‘unusually many corrections’, asked ‘How do you know what’s usual?’ and ‘So what?’ This book began as an attempt to answer these two questions – especially the second, which people who are not palaeographers quite reasonably ask.
Note on transcriptions

In transcribing corrections from manuscripts, I use the following conventions:

- `cats and dogs` added level in a blank space or adjacent to the end of the line
- `cats dogs and` added in the margin
- `cats ^and dogs^` and interlined above the line, in this case with a caret mark of some sort
- `cats and [cats]dogs` crossed out, subpuncted or erased; `dogs` interlined above the line
- `cats and [cats]dogs^` crossed out, subpuncted or erased; `dogs` interlined above the line
- `cats erased; dogs written over the erasure` (overwritten)
- `cats [-d] dogs` a word between `cats` and `dogs` crossed out, subpuncted or erased and impossible to read, but likely having three letters, two of them indeterminable, the last likely `d`
- `[->][cats and dogs]` `cats and dogs` written over erasure; the erasure now illegible but of the same length as the writing above it
- `[->][cats and dogs]` `cats and dogs` written over erasure; the erasure now illegible and slightly longer than the writing above it, with space left blank
- `cats <and> dogs` and difficult to read for whatever reason

The terms cross out, subpunct, erase and interlineate or interline are explained in Chapter 5.

I have used italics to mark all expansions of abbreviations, which is ugly but necessary here, as the argument often concerns points of spelling. I have not usually noted my policy for deciding which possible marks of
Note on transcriptions

abbreviation to treat as 'otiose' strokes, unless relevant to the argument. As most of the manuscripts date from the fifteenth century, I have tended to ignore flourishes and horizontal marks as otiose when they would add <e> to word-final <ch>, <gh>, <ght>, <m>, <n> and <th> (for instance, ignoring an otiose stroke on II in 'will' in the epigraph to Chapter 1), but tended to expand them when they would add <e> to <r> or would add <i>, <n> or <u> to <on>, <iou> or <ion>. I have reproduced the punctuation in manuscripts as best I could in typescript. The punctus elevatus is reproduced thus: . with a full-stop followed by an apostrophe. For clarity about what is a scribal punctus, my ellipses of quotations are in square brackets thus [ . . . ].

I place letters discussed for their spelling in angle brackets, such as <ght>, phonetic symbols in virgules, such as /xt/, and graphs discussed as visual phenomena in bold, such as ʒ.

I provide line numbers from manuscripts only when the feature discussed seems difficult to spot. Such line numbers follow the folio and a virgule / and, where relevant, 'a' or 'b' to specify which column: f. 1r/a7 is the seventh line on the first column of the first page.

If modern editions have line numbers, I use them rather than page numbers. I place 'book' numbers in roman numerals before a point: Fall, i.1421 is book i, line 1421 of Lydgate's The Fall of Princes. If the line numbers restart on each page, as in some editions of prose, the page number is given followed by the line number after a point: Brut, 243.6 is line 6 on page 243 of the Middle English prose Brut as edited by Friedrich W. D. Brie.
Abbreviations

BL London, British Library
BodL Oxford, Bodleian Library
CCCC Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library
ChRev. Chaucer Review
CUL Cambridge, University Library
EETS Early English Text Society
os original series
es extra series
ss supplementary series
EMS English Manuscript Studies
Gamelyn Gamelyn, in Donald B. Sands (ed.), Middle English Verse Romances (1966; University of Exeter Press, 1986), 154–81
GUL Glasgow, University Library
HEHL San Marino, CA, Henry E. Huntington Library
HLQ Huntington Library Quarterly
Hoccleve, MP Thomas Hoccleve, Minor Poems, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS es 61 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1892)

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List of abbreviations


JEBS *Journal of the Early Book Society*

JRL Manchester, John Rylands Library


MÆ *Medium Âevum*


N&Q *Notes and Queries*

NHC Anne B. Thompson (ed.), *The Northern Homily Cycle* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008)

NM *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*

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<tr>
<td>OTC</td>
<td>Oxford, Trinity College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PML</td>
<td>New York, NY, Pierpont Morgan Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Prick</em></td>
<td>Richard Morris (ed.), <em>The Pricke of Conscience (Stimulus conscientiae)</em> (Berlin: Asher, 1863)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PUL</td>
<td>Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>Rolls Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAC</td>
<td><em>Studies in the Age of Chaucer</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td><em>Studies in Bibliography</em></td>
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Tales

TCC
Cambridge, Trinity College Library

Troilus
Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. B.A. Windeatt (London: Longman, 1984), with reference to book and line numbers (1.515), or followed by ‘ed. Windeatt’ and page numbers for the introduction

UL
University Library


Wycliffite Bible
Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden (eds.), *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books, in the Earliest English Versions Made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and His Followers*, 4 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1850), with book, chapter and verse thus: Galatians 5.16

YLS
*Yearbook of Langland Studies*

Yorkshire Writers

Some chapters cite certain MSS frequently by the following sigla, repeated here for ready reference:

Ar BL, MS Arundel 38
Bm BL, MS Add. 10574
Bo BodL, MS Bodley 814
Cot BL, MS Cotton Caligula A.xi
D BodL, MS Douce 372
Ds Tokyo, Takamiya collection, MS 24, *olim ‘The Devonshire Chaucer’*
Du Durham, UL, MS Cosin V.iii.9
Ee CUL, MS Ee.1.12
En BL, MS Egerton 2726
List of abbreviations

Gl  GUL, MS Hunter 197 (U.1.1)
Gw  GUL, MS Hunter 83 (T.3.21)
H2  BL, MS Harley 4775
Ha4 BL, MS Harley 4866
HM 58 HEHL, MS HM 58
HM 111 HEHL, MS HM 111
HM 744 HEHL, MS HM 744 (Part II)
Hy  BL, MS Harley 3730
Mc  Chicago, UL, MS 564
Mm  CUL, MS Mm.2.5
Pet Cambridge, Peterhouse, MS 190
Ra1 BodL, MS Rawl. poet. 141
Ry3 BL, MS Royal 17.D.xviii
SR 9 BL, MS Harley 2281
SR 18 HEHL, MS HM 130