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978-1-107-07622-8 - Scribal Correction and Literary Craft: English Manuscripts 1375–1510

Daniel Wakelin

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SCRIBAL CORRECTION AND LITERARY CRAFT

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

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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 ll 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 3.

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. 1^r/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*, 1.1421 is book 1, 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
<i>Brut</i>	Friedrich W.D. Brie (ed.), <i>The Brut or The Chronicles of England</i> , EETS os 131, 136, 2 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1906–8)
CCCC	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library
<i>ChRev.</i>	<i>Chaucer Review</i>
CUL	Cambridge, University Library
EETS	Early English Text Society
	os original series
	es extra series
	ss supplementary series
<i>EMS</i>	<i>English Manuscript Studies</i>
<i>Fall</i>	John Lydgate, <i>Fall of Princes</i> , ed. Henry Bergen, EETS es 121–4, 4 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1924–7), with book numbers and line numbers thus: VIII.426
<i>Gamelyn</i>	<i>Gamelyn</i> , in Donald B. Sands (ed.), <i>Middle English Verse Romances</i> (1966; University of Exeter Press, 1986), 154–81
GUL	Glasgow, University Library
HEHL	San Marino, CA, Henry E. Huntington Library
<i>HLQ</i>	<i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i>
Hoccleve, <i>MP</i>	Thomas Hoccleve, <i>Minor Poems</i> , ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS es 61 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1892)

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Hudson (ed.), ' <i>Omnis plantacio</i> '	'The Egerton sermon', in Anne Hudson (ed.), <i>The Works of a Lollard Preacher</i> , EETS os 317 (London: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2–143, with line numbers
<i>JEBS</i>	<i>Journal of the Early Book Society</i>
JRL	Manchester, John Rylands Library
<i>LALME</i>	Angus McIntosh, M.L. Samuels and Michael Benskin, with the assistance of Margaret Laing and Keith Williamson, <i>A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English</i> , 4 vols. (Aberdeen University Press, 1986)
<i>LMES</i>	Linne R. Mooney, Simon Horobin and Estelle Stubbs, <i>Late Medieval English Scribes</i> , www.medievalscribes.com, ISBN 978-0-9557876-6-9
Lydgate, <i>LOL</i>	John Lydgate, <i>Life of Our Lady</i> , ed. Joseph A. Lauritis, Ralph A. Klinefelter and Vernon F. Gallagher, Duquesne Studies: Philological Series 2 (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1961)
Lydgate, <i>MP-I</i>	John Lydgate, <i>Minor Poems</i> , ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS es 107 (London: Oxford University Press, 1911)
Lydgate, <i>MP-II</i>	John Lydgate, <i>Minor Poems</i> , ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS os 192 (London: Oxford University Press, 1934)
<i>MÆ</i>	<i>Medium Ævum</i>
<i>MED</i>	Hans Kurath and others (eds.), <i>The Middle English Dictionary</i> (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952–2001); http://ets.umd.umich.edu/m/med
<i>Mirror</i>	Nicholas Love, <i>The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ</i> , ed. Michael G. Sargent (University of Exeter Press, 2005)
<i>N&Q</i>	<i>Notes and Queries</i>
<i>NHC</i>	Anne B. Thompson (ed.), <i>The Northern Homily Cycle</i> (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008)
<i>NM</i>	<i>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i> , ed. John A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, 2nd edn, 20 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); www.oed.com

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OTC	Oxford, Trinity College
<i>Piers A</i>	William Langland, <i>Piers Plowman: The A Version: Will's Visions of Piers Plowman and Do-Well</i> , ed. George Kane, rev. edn (1960; London: Athlone, 1988), with passus-and-line numbers for the poem ('xx.1'), or followed by 'ed. Kane' and page numbers for the introduction
<i>Piers B</i>	William Langland, <i>Piers Plowman: The B Version: Will's Visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best</i> , ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson, rev. edn (1975; London: Athlone, 1988), with references as for <i>Piers A</i>
<i>Piers C</i>	William Langland, <i>Piers Plowman: The C Version: Will's Visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better, and Do-Best</i> , ed. George Russell and George Kane (London: Athlone, 1997), with references as for <i>Piers A</i>
PML	New York, NY, Pierpont Morgan Library
<i>Polychronicon</i>	Ranulph Higden, <i>Polychronicon</i> , trans. John Trevisa, ed. Churchill Babington and J. Rawson Lumby, RS 4I, 9 vols. (London: HMSO, 1865–86), with book, chapter, and page numbers thus: III.33.57
<i>Prick</i>	Richard Morris (ed.), <i>The Pricke of Conscience (Stimulus conscientiae)</i> (Berlin: Asher, 1863)
PUL	Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library
<i>Regiment</i>	Thomas Hoccleve, <i>The Regiment of Princes</i> , ed. Charles R. Blyth (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999)
RS	Rolls Series
<i>SAC</i>	<i>Studies in the Age of Chaucer</i>
<i>SB</i>	<i>Studies in Bibliography</i>
<i>Scale</i>	Walter Hilton, <i>The Scale of Perfection</i> , ed. Evelyn Underhill (London: Watkins, 1923)
<i>STC</i>	A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, <i>A Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640</i> , ed. W.A. Jackson, F.S. Ferguson and Katherine F. Pantzer, 2nd edn, 3 vols. (London: Bibliographical Society, 1976–91)

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<i>Tales</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer, <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> , in <i>The Riverside Chaucer</i> , ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford University Press, 1988), with fragment-numbers and line numbers
TCC	Cambridge, Trinity College Library
<i>Troilus</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer, <i>Troilus and Criseyde</i> , 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
Walton (trans.), <i>Boethius</i>	John Walton (trans.), <i>Boethius: De consolacione philosophiae</i> , ed. Mark Science, EETS os 170 (London: Oxford University Press, 1927)
<i>Wycliffite Bible</i>	Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden (eds.), <i>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</i> , 4 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1850), with book, chapter and verse thus: Galatians 5.16
YLS	<i>Yearbook of Langland Studies</i>
<i>Yorkshire Writers</i>	C. Horstmann (ed.), <i>Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole, an English Father of the Church, and His Followers</i> , 2 vols. (London: Sonnenschein, 1895–6)

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, <i>olim</i> ‘The Devonshire Chaucer’
Du	Durham, UL, MS Cosin V.iii.9
Ee	CUL, MS Ee.1.12
En ¹	BL, MS Egerton 2726

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Gl	GUL, MS Hunter 197 (U.1.1)
Gw	GUL, MS Hunter 83 (T.3.21)
H2	BL, MS Harley 4775
Ha ⁴	BL, MS Harley 4866
HM 58	HEHL, MS HM 58
HM III	HEHL, MS HM III
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
Ra ¹	BodL, MS Rawl. poet. 141
Ry ³	BL, MS Royal 17.D.xviii
SR 9	BL, MS Harley 2281
SR 18	HEHL, MS HM 130