



Editing Middle English Punctuation. The Case of MS Egerton 2622 (ff. 136-152)¹

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the study of medieval punctuation systems has been skipped by scholars in view of the lack of consistency in their use. However, specific studies have been recently published showing that the punctuation practice of medieval scribes was not that whimsical (Alonso-Almeida, 2002; Leiffard, 1992; Rodríguez-Álvarez, 1998). In the present paper, a 15th-century arithmetical treatise housed in British Library, MS Egerton 2622 (ff. 136^r-152^v) will be analysed with a twofold objective: a) to offer a detailed account of the use and function of symbols in the treatise; and b) to find the correspondence with modern punctuation.

KEYWORDS

codicology, editing, grammatical punctuation, manuscript, Middle English, rhetorical punctuation, palaeography

I. INTRODUCTION

Eats, shoots and leaves is the title of Lynn Truss' recipe-book for marks of punctuation. She opens it with an ingenious punctuation joke in which a panda goes into a café, orders a sandwich, eats it, draws a gun and fires two shots in the air (2003: 2). Even though the expression *eats, shoots and leaves* could make sense in a western film context, the panda's utterance does convey a different sense, as it coincides with a dictionary definition of a panda, being defined as a bear-

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like mammal that *eats shoots and leaves*. This pun points out that punctuation really matters inasmuch as a single comma may turn this utterance into the actual definition of the animal.

Unfortunately, this notion about the importance of marks of punctuation has not always been that widespread. In the case of mediaeval manuscripts, for instance, a close analysis of marks of punctuation reveals a set of contradictory issues which the scholar often finds difficult to interpret. The main problem, in our view, has to do with the scribes' attitudes towards pointing, which differs from modern punctuation in the following ways: a) the inventory of marks of punctuation varies from one author to another, and from period to period, a fact which complicates the task of obtaining conclusive data about historical punctuation; b) mediaeval scribes only punctuated where confusion was likely to arise, that is why the absence of marks may become even more frequent than their actual use (see Parkes, 1978: 138-139); and c) marks of punctuation did not have exclusive uses, all symbols being interchangeable (Jenkinson, 1926: 154). To the eye of a modern reader, therefore, historical punctuation seems to be a hotchpotch of symbols irregularly distributed throughout the folios of the manuscript, often with overlapping uses, whose function is difficult to comprehend. This has been, in fact, the traditional conception of punctuation in historical texts (see Rodríguez-Álvarez, 1999: 27-28 for a more comprehensive view on the absence, non-specialisation and arbitrariness of marks of punctuation).

Even though this is the picture that we find in many mediaeval prose compositions, there are some others which present a coherent inventory of marks. Each symbol has particular uses to express all types of grammatical relations, both at macro- and micro-structural level, apart from those used rhetorically, which may also have an overwhelming importance in historical texts (Rodríguez-Álvarez, 1998: 123-128). In the light of this, it is a must for modern palaeographers to analyse these texts in order to obtain a wider scope on punctuation marks in mediaeval England. In this paper, therefore, a 15th century text will be analysed. Accordingly, section 2 is a description of the text; section 3 is concerned with the treatment of punctuation in the only edition published so far; section 4 reports the methodological scheme followed in our study while section 5 deals with the analysis of symbols in the original. Finally, our conclusions are offered in section 6.

II. THE CRAFT OF NOMBRYNGE

The text analysed is a 15th-century treatise housed in British Library, MS Egerton 2622 (ff. 136-165), containing a Middle English version of *The Craft of Nombrynge*. The text is written by a sole hand in vellum using a readable hybrid script —the *Anglicana Formata* and the *Secretaria*, the two most widespread 15th-century scripts (Calle-Martín, 2004a: 82-84; Petti, 1977: 15). Given the good state of preservation of the document, it is still possible to see some traces of frame and line ruling. The linguistic analysis of the text reveals that it is a 15th-century copy of a 14th-century text, under the influence of the West Midlands dialect —West Derbyshire according to the *LALME* (McIntosh, Samuels & Benskin, 1986, 3: 80-81).

The Crafte of Nomhrynge is a translation of Alexander de Villadieu's *Carmen de Algorismo*. This Latin piece was written in the 12th century and, together with Sacrobosco's *De Arte Numerandi*, were the most widely known arithmetical treatises in the 14th century, to such extent that they served as arithmetical textbooks in many centres of learning as well as being a compulsory reading for those engaged in the study of the calendar and the astrolabe. In the case of English, for instance, there are three translations: one housed in British Library, Egerton MS 2622 (ff. 136'-165'); another in Columbia University Library, Plimpton MS 259 (ff. 55'-77'); and the third in Cambridge University Library, MS LI.4.14 (ff. 121'-140'). The textual variation of these treatises has been researched by Acker, who concludes that they come from three distinct Latin glosses of the *Carmen* (Acker, 1993: 74). While the two first treatises are direct renderings of a different Latin version, the Cambridge text seems to be a compilation of Villadieu's and Sacrobosco's pieces.

The Egerton MS is a translation where Latin excerpts are followed by a Middle English description of the arithmetical operation involved. The translator's preoccupation to convince the reader of the accuracy of his rendering leads him to use the Latin version as an authority on arithmetical terms with statements like *expone sic versus, the sentence of yis verse is [...], here he teches a generalle rewle*, etc. In addition, a constant worry about the correct understanding of the text is observed, that is why the translator is so meticulous when explaining the procedure to solve the arithmetical operation with everyday expressions, probably to encourage his readers, such as *it is lyȝȝ as dychen water, it is lyȝȝ ynovȝ to ye certayn, doute ye noȝȝ, as you knowest wel*, etc.

III. FORMER EDITORS

There are two published editions of *The Crafte of Nombrynge*. While Smith's (1908: 301-309) is just a partial reproduction of the beginning, Steele's edition (1922: 3-32) stands out for being the only complete critical edition of this mediaeval *algorism*. As in other *Early English Text Society* (EETS) publications from the early 20th century, the editorial method followed by Steele differs from that of a modern editor. From a contemporary perspective, the main shortcoming of the edition arises from the absence of key details of the original: there are often mistranscriptions; inconsistent reconstruction of abbreviations; unjustified lexical changes owing to the editor's pericope; omissions, both of single words and full lines; apart from the information contained in the critical apparatus concerning the date and the dialectal provenance of the text, which is basically erroneous (see Calle-Martin, 2004a: 78-88).

The rendering of punctuation symbols, on the other hand, is even more problematic insofar as there is not any kind of guidance in the introduction, leaving the reader with the task of ascertaining the exact meaning of the symbols used. The dilemma of preserving or modernizing the original punctuation is ambiguously accomplished by Steele, who prefers to remain somewhere in between. Even though the tendency to modernize predominates (with the

use of commas, colons and semicolons). Steele incorporates some of the original marks, such as the *paraph* mark or the *virgula*, which undoubtedly obscure the editor's intention. More bewildering is, however, the frequent use of the *punctus* as in the original text. The merging of these two systems of punctuation leaves the reader at a loss to ascertain which marks belong to the original and which ones are modernized.

Furthermore, the mingling of these systems within the same edition presents another problem, having to do with the patchy level of standardisation of the edition. An analysis of Steele's marks of punctuation also reveals a number of inconsistencies which make it unsuitable for scholarly use. The most important are the following:

a) When enumerating, Steele haphazardly combines the use of the full stop with the comma. Note also the unexpected use of the colon after *subtraccion*:

Here telles þat þer beii .7. spices or partes of þis craft. The first is called addicioii, þe secuiide is called subtraccioii: The thiryd is called duplacion. The 4. is called diyndicioii. The 5. is called multiplicacion (Steele. 1922: 7).

b) Coordinate clauses are also connected by means of a full stop:

Here he telles þat þe hier iioinber most be inore þen þe neþer, or els euen as mych but he inay iiot be lasse (Steele, 1922: 11).

Tliou shalt do away þe figure of þe hyer nomber þat was cast io þe figure of þe neþer iioinber. Aiid write þere þe digit of þe Coinposyt. Aiid set þe articul of þe coinposit iiext after þe digit in þe same rewe, yf þere be iio iiio figures after. Rut yf þere be ino figures after þat digit [...] (Steele, 1922: 9).

c) The relationship between the main and the subordinate clause is signalled either with a full stop or with no mark of punctuation at all, both possibilities being odd to the modern reader. See an example of each:

Aiid lede þe nether figure stoiide still euer-more til þou haue ydo. ffor bere-by þou schal wyte wheþer þou hast doiiie wel or iio [...] (Steele. 1922: 8).

Here he teches a geiieralle rewle þat yf þe first figure iii þe rewle of figures toheii a nombur þat is eueiie al þat nombur of figurys in þat rewle schal be eueiie [...] (Steele. 1922: 7).

d) The distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses is by large disregarded because the mark is used without considering the type of relativization. Likewise, sentential relatives are reproduced without any kind of pause.

[...] þou schalle fyrst doubulle þe figure, the quych stoiides vnder þat merke, & þen þou schalt doubul þat inerke [...] (Steele, 1922: 16).

[...] ffortene is compond of foure þat is a digit & of teii þat is aii articulle (Steele, 1922: 6).

Now doubul this iioinbur & begyii in þe lyft side, & doubulle 2 þat schal be 4 (Steele, 1922: 20).

These shortcomings may be justified in the light of the editorial policy of the EETS at the beginning of the 20th century. It is widely known that the Society was initially created to supply the *Oxford English Dictionary* with new entries. Words mattered even more than the edition itself, a fact which may, to a broad extent, explain the inconsistencies of Steele's edition. This philosophy, however, has changed one century later since its most immediate aim now is the publication of scholarly editions to offer faithful transcripts of the original. It is, nonetheless, strange that Steele's volume was reprinted in 1998, preserving the same shortcomings of the 1922 edition. As it is now published, it is not valid for research purposes, either at a morpho-syntactic, lexical or codicological level, punctuation included. In light of this, a new critical edition of this treatise would be more than welcome insofar as it could emend Steele's faulty transcriptions, reconsider the date and provenance of the text, as well as incorporate a more coherent position about punctuation, whether old or modern.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The present study is entirely based on a previous editing of *The Crafte of Nombrynge* (Calle-Martín, 2001: 345-410). As Steele's edition is not recommended, a careful collation with the original manuscript was needed to obtain the catalogue of marks of punctuation as the scribe penned them himself.³ This electronic version of the text eventually served as the input for WORDSMITH TOOLS 3.0 (Scott, 1996) which generated the inventory of symbols automatically.

The result was then saved as a text file and downloaded onto an Excel spread-sheet so that the columns (from left to right) could contain the previous context, the mark itself, the ensuing context, and the reference according to the original (folio and line number). This software is particularly appropriate for the treatment of marks of punctuation as the instances can be arranged in alphabetical order according to the word which appears after the symbol under scrutiny. Using this method, the taxonomy of the uses of punctuation marks is eased as the complete set of coordinate and subordinate clauses along with those heading a direct or reported speech could be grouped easily. Given the impossibility of a further automatic classification, the other uses were arranged manually.

V. THE INVENTORY OF PUNCTUATION IN MS EGERTON 2622

According to Parkes, the general repertory of punctuation in the later Middle Ages was based on four principal components — the *punctus*, the *punctus elevatus*, the *punctus interrogativus* and *littera notabiliores*, as well as the *virgula*, the *peritiph* and the *positura* (Parkes, 1992: 42-45). The *Crafte of Nombrynge*, in turn, only shows evidence of the *punctus*, the *paraph* and the *virgula suspensiva*. Being a 15th-century composition, *The Crafte of Nombrynge* should display a more far-reaching repertory, as in other contemporary prose texts (Alonso-Almeida, 2002: 207-

232). The lack of the *punctus elevatus* and the *punctus interrogativus* actually sheds light on the fact that the treatise housed in Egerton 2622 could be a 15th-century copy of a former original, probably dated one hundred years earlier. Apart from these marks of punctuation, the scribe occasionally makes use of the colon (:), and the *double hyphen* (=), which appear to mark off the splitting of a word into two lines.

A further issue has to do with the ultimate function of these marks (whether grammatical or rhetorical). From a stylistic point of view, *The Crafte of Nombrynge* was basically written as a reference book, probably for those involved in the private study of the *computus* and other similar sciences. The most immediate aim of this composition was silent reading; therefore, the ‘dilemma’ between the grammatical and the rhetorical side of punctuation will be solved here in favour of the former, though rhetorical punctuation can also be found.

In our description, we begin with the analysis of the *paragraphus* and the *virgula suspensiva* because they are the symbols which are most commonly used to signal macro structural relations. The *punctus* comes next, being the mark typically used with micro-structural implications.

V.1. Initial shading

The Crafte of Nombrynge shows initial red and blue shading of some letters, which are found to have the effect of a punctuation mark (Lucas, 1971: 11). The first letter of a major section is systematically a coloured bold-typed majuscule which is purposely employed to help skimming and thus identify the major parts of the text —the art of numbering itself as well as the various arithmetical operations such as addition, subtraction, doubling, halving and multiplication.

V.2. The paraph mark

The *paraph* mark, or section marker as Lucas (1971: 4) calls it, is represented by means of a capital letter C with two vertical strokes, the first one curved rightwards. There are 189 instances of the *paraph* in *The Crafte of Nombrynge*, which may be either blue or red-hued; the use of one or the other does not respond to any particular intention of the scribe, being just for decorative purposes.

Owing to the close resemblance with the printer's sign ¶, we will use this same symbol in the instances below. As in many other mediaeval compositions, Egerton 2622 shows that some punctuation symbols, especially the *virgula suspensiva* and the *paraph mark*, were inserted after the writing of the text. This is demonstrated by the existence of some blank spaces in the running text where these marks should have been inserted, being likely the result of the limner's slip.

The use of this symbol is found to vary in Middle English texts. For instance, Alonso-Almeida (2002: 225), in his analysis of a Middle English remedy book, found that the *paraph* was a visual device to indicate that a word runs over from the previous line. Zecman, on the other hand, stated that "[it] marks a significant pause in the flow of writing, when one idea or portion of narrative or argument has been completed, and some breathing space is needed, perhaps for thought on what has gone before, perhaps for anticipation of what is to come" (1956:

13). It is used as a macro structural marker to indicate particular relationships within the paragraph as well as the major sections and subsections within the text. This is the dominant use of the *paraph* in Middle English compositions, as shown in Lucas (1971: 6) and Calle-Martín (2004b: 417-418). etc. In *The Crafte of Nombrynge*, in turn, the *paraph* is used in the following cases:

a) To mark off the beginning of a section or subsection: this is one of the most widespread uses of the *paraph*, totalling 62 instances. It is a grammatical symbol as it is clearly indicating the end of a unit and at the same time looks forward to a new structurally independent unit (Lucas, 1971: 6). The first instance below shows how the *paraph* is used as a section marker to signal the end of the arithmetical operation of addition and thus introduce the art of doubling, as the author calls it himself. On the other hand, it may be also used as a device to mark off the beginning of a subsection wherein both sense-units still have some sort of semantic connection, as in the second example below, where the author is dealing with the art of halving and the *paraph* is used to split two cases.

Aiid yeii schal yu liaue aii Ensampulle aȝeyn loke & se & but yu liaue yis saine yu liase iiiyse wroȝt. ¶ Sequitur de duplicacione. Si vis duplicare numerum sic incipe priiiiio Scribe figurarum seriem quamcunque velis tu. (f. 146^r, 11-17).

Aiid yis saine iionibur yu haddyst a fore or yu be gaii to inedy & yf yu take gode liede ¶ The iixt eiisainpul yat had in ye 4^e case ofinediacionii was yis 4678. (f. 152^r, 15-19).

Additionally, the *paraph* is found as a sense-unit sign to single out the sentence which follows. In the instance below, it serves to inform the reader that this particular information will be dealt with in detail afterwards:

Here he telles liow yu schalt worch in yis Craft: he says fyrst whan yii hast writen ye nombre yu schalt be gyn at ye first figure iii the lyft side & doubulle yat figure & ye nombre yat coines yere of yu schalt write as yu diddyst iii addicion as ¶ I schal telle ye iii ye case. versus (f. 146^v, 24-30).

b) To separate the English and the Latin pieces: the main function of this mark would be exclusively grammatical, as it is a visual device to announce where the text in the other language begins. In the following instance the *paraph* is basically a section marker, while the other marks the beginning of an English narrative. Therefore, it must not be considered a section marker as such because both Latin and English convey the same meaning.

¶ Sequitur de duplicacione. Si vis duplicare numerum sic incipe primo Scribe figurarum seriem quamcunque velis tu. ¶ This is the Chapture of duplicacionii in ye quych craft yu most liaue & hiiow 4^e thinges. (f. 146^r, 14-19).

¶ Articulus si sit in priiiiio limite cifram. Articulum vero reliquis inscribe figuris. ¶ here he telles liow yu schal write when ye iioinber yat yu liase to write is an Articul. (f. 139^r, 5-8).

In the same way, the *purrrph* is also used to separate the Latin verses from one another, the function of which would be again grammatical as it is just a visual device to inform the reader about the different lines quoted from the *Carmen*. The following example shows the three different uses of the *purrrph* described so far—the first one as a section marker to indicate the beginning of the art of numbering, the next three to separate the various Latin verses, and the last one to indicate the beginning of writing in the vernacular:

[...] as I haue sayd a fore yai were foide fyrst in Inde of a kyiige of yat Ciiitre yat was called Algor ¶ Priina significat unum duo vero secunda ¶ Tercia significat tria sic procede sinistre ¶ Donec ad extremam veiiias que cifra vocatur ¶ Capituluin primum de sigiificacione figurarum ¶ In yis verse is notifide ye significacion of yese figuris (f. 136^r, 21-28).

c) So enumerate: the *purrrph* is systematically used to separate the different units of an enumeration, both clauses and phrases. It is a visual aid for the reader to find the elements of the enumeration but, at the same time, a pause is also implied. Likewise, the *paraph* may be also used with the *punctus*, though the former clearly predominates. See the following examples:

[...] yf yat figure of 6· stoiide in ye fyrst place he scliuld betoken but 6 ¶ In ye 2· place lie scliuld be token sixty ¶ In the 3 place he scliuld be tokeii sex hundryth ¶ In ye 4· place sex thousand ¶ In ye 5· place sixty bowsant ¶ In ye sext place sex hundryth bowsant ¶ In ye 7 place 6· yowsant thousandes ¶ In ye 8 place sixty bowsant thousandes (f. 162^v, 12-21).

¶ This is the Cliapture of diiplacion in ye quycli craft yu inost liaiie & know 4· thinges ¶ ye first yat yu inost know is wliat is duplacion· ye secunde is how mony rewes of figures yu inost haue to yis craft ¶ ye thryde is how inoiyy cases inay liappe in yis craft ¶ ye fourte is wliat is ye profet of ye craft (f. 146^r, 17-34).

d) To introduce direct speech: direct speech is materialized in the text in the form of questions and answers. The writer uses the *paraph mark* and the word *questio* to introduce these questions which, in my opinion, have the effect of a mark of punctuation to distinguish it from reported speech. The function of this mark would be rhetorical as it is informing the reader about the appropriate intonation to read the sentence. Likewise, the end may be signalled either by a *paraph* or a *punctus*:

And ye cifre tokens iioitlyiig hym selfe for al ye number of ye ylke too figures is bot ten ¶ Questio Wlii says he yat a cifre inakys a figure to signifyetyf inore &c ¶ I speke for yis worde significatyf ffor sothe it inay liappe after a cifre scliuld coine a iioyei- cifre [...] (f. 137^v, 11-15).

Expone y' too versus a fore yis pi-eseiit craft ys called Algorismus in ye quycli we vse teii figurys of Inde Questio ¶ Wlii teii figuris of Inde Solucio for as I haue sayd a fore yai were foide fyrst in Inde of a kyiige of yat Cuiitre yat was called Algor (f. 136^r, 18-23).

e) To conclude: the *paraph* is occasionally used to introduce a conclusion, which may be the result of an arithmetical operation or even the procedure itself for solving the task in hand. Its function would be rhetorical because it involves a minor pause for the reader to summarize the information contained in the preceding lines. See the following instances:

Aiid he scial betokeii sixty þowsant thousandes. And so mych is tweitty þowsant tyines 3· thousand. ¶ Aiid yis rewle is generale for alle maner of articuls. Whethir yai be hundryth or þowsant. but yu most know well ye craft of ye wryrhyngē iii ye tabulle or you kiow todo yus iii yi inyiide aftur yis rewle [...] (f. 162^v, 22-28 aiid f. 163^r, 1-2).

Also yf you wold wete wliat is tweitty tyines ·30· take ye digit of tweitty yat is 2· & take ye digit of thrytty yat is 3· multiplie 3· be 2· yat is 6· now in 6· beii 6· vnites. ¶ Aiid so mony hundrythes ben in 20 tyines 30· (f. 161^r, 24-29).

f) To introduce a coordinate clause: even though the *punctus* is the symbol more consistently used to introduce a coordinate clause, the *paraph* may seldom serve the same purposes. There is, however, a significant difference. From a semantic viewpoint, those coordinate clauses linked by a *paraph* contain key information about the arithmetical operation described and, as such, they act as a kind of warning for the reader to pay attention to what follows. Therefore, the *paraph* is rather a macro-structural marker to highlight where the most important information is, being conveyed here by means of a coordinate clause:

Aiid lede ye iietlier figure stoidē still euer inore til yu liaue ydo. ffor yere by yu scial wyte wheyer yu hast done wel or iio as I scial tell ye afterward iii ye ende of yis Chaptre ¶ Aiid loke allgate yat you be gyiiiie to worcli iii yis Craft of Addicion iii ye ryȝt side here is an ensampul of yis case 1234· (f. 140^v, 23-28 aiid f. 141^r, 1-2).

Caste 2 to foure & yat wel be sex do a way 4· & write iii ye saine place ye figure of sex ¶ Aiid lete ye figure of 2 in ye iietlier rewe stoidē stil· (f. 141^r, 2-5).

g) Before logical connectors, especially in the case of *also*, *neueryeles*, *fforyermore*, *noiv*, etc. See the following instances:

As for ye foure· qwal is ye profet of yis craft & yat is to kiow wliat a risyȝt of a iionbre I doublyde ¶ fforyer inore yu most know & rake gode liede in quycli side yii schalle be gyii iii yis craft or ellis yu inayst spyl alle yi laber (f. 146^v, 4-9).

Tlie figure of 5· was first write & he is ye first for he sittes oii ye riȝt syde. Aiid ye figure of 3 is last. ¶ Neueryeles weii he says § Priina significat Vnum &c· yat is to say ye first betokeiies one· ye secunde ·2· (f. 136^v, 10-14).

V.3. The *virgula suspensiva*

The *virgule* is represented in the treatise by means of an ordinary slash (/). There are just eleven instances of the *virgule* in *The Crafte of Nombrynge* and it is therefore impossible to evaluate its uses and functions appropriately. Apart from the *virgule* itself, the treatise also shows instances of the *perioslash*, as Arakelian names it (1975: 619); which consists of a period together with a slash (./).

As in the case of the *paraph*, the function of the *virgule* in mediaeval England is contradictory as the different studies show that it was a mark of punctuation used for contrasting uses. In this fashion, Lucas' study perfectly summarizes the manifold applications of the slash in the sense that it could appear "before a section dealing with an entirely different subject from that which preceded, sometimes before a section dealing with a different aspect of a subject already introduced, sometimes before a statement summarizing what has preceded, sometimes before a separate item in a series, and sometimes before a new sentence where there is no obvious change in subject matter" (Lucas, 1971: 9).

Subsequent studies, however, have demonstrated that Lucas offers just one side of the coin. Alonso-Almeida (2002: 222-224) observed that the slash was used primarily as a macrostructural marker to announce the beginning and the end of a recipe as well as to separate the different sections of the recipe. Arakelian (1975: 617-618) and Gradon (1983: 41) concluded that it is rather a micro-structural marker to link sentences on the same level of embedding,—that is, coordinate clauses with the same or a different conjoined subject. Gradon, furthermore, suggests that in other contexts the *virgule* may also indicate the ending of a sentence. *The Crafte of Nombrynge*, in turn, seems to combine these macro- and micro-structural views of the slash, being used in the following contexts:

a) To indicate the beginning of a new section: in the following instance the writer uses the slash after the section title to announce the beginning of a new section. Its main function would be grammatical:

Sequitur de multiplicatione / Si tu per numerum numerum vis multiplicare Scribe
duas quascunque velis series numerorum Ordo seruetur vt vltima multiplicandi
Ponatur super anteriorem multiplicantes A leua relique sint scripte multiplicantes
¶ Here be gyiiiis ye Cliapre of multiplicacion (f. 153^r, 12-19).

b) To mark off the end of a sentence: the writer here makes use of the *virgule* to signal the sentence end and thus separate it from a new statement. Therefore, it is a grammatical device to split two sense-units, which may be either independent or semantically connected. It could also be rhetorical because a major pause is involved between both sense-units. Notice also that the *double virgule* may be used for this same purpose.

As for ye first you inost kiiow yat addicioii is a castyiige to gedur of twoo
nomburys iii to oii nombre. As yf I aske quat is twene & thre: yu wyl cast yese

twene nombres to gedur & say yat it is fyue / ¶ As for ye secuiide you most kiiow yat you schialt haue tweyne rewes of figures. oii vndur a nother as here yu mayst se· (f. 140^v, 13-20).

Articulus si sit in priino limite cifram ¶ Articulum vero reliquis inscribe figuris· ¶ Vel per se scribas si nulla figura sequatur / ¶ Here is ye secuiide case ye quycli is yis yfyere coine aii articulle of ye duplacion of a figure yu schialt do ryȝt as yu diddyst in addicioii (f. 147^v, 11-17).

¶ De digitis vt iiorina de multiplica simul & sic postea summa patebit // Here he puttes ye 4· rewle ye quycli is yis yf you multiply oii coinposit be a digit as 6· tyiiies 6· (f. 163^v, 8-12).

c) To link coordinate clauses: the slash here is used to connect two coordinate clauses with the same level of embedding. Hence, the function of this mark would be grammatical, being a visual device to cotinct the sentences. Notably significant, however, is the fact that this use of the *virgule* happens to be unusual in the treatise because this function is primarily performed by the *punctus*. In the light of the limited number of instances, we are not able to obtain a more compreliesivc picture to compare the differences between the *virgule* and the *punctus*.

Thou schal begyn to rede at ye figure of ·9· & rede forth yus ·9· thiousaiid sex hundryth thritty & foure / But wlieii yu schialt write yu schialt be gynne to write at ye ryȝt side· (f. 137^v, 29-30 aiiid f. 137^v, 1).

The *perioslash*, on the other hand, differs from the ordinary slash in their conjunctive versus the disjunctive nature. In his analysis of a Middle English manuscript, Arakelian (1975: 617-618) argues that the most outstanding difference between the two lies in their linking or splitting function. Whereas the *virgule* is eminently a conjunctive mark, the *perioslah* is basically disjunctive in the sense that it signals a final stop and, as such, separates structurally and semantically independent sense units. Accordingly, the function of this mark would be granimatical. The instance below shows how the writer makes use of the *perioslash* to separate the three things that the reader needs to multiply correctly and the main profit of this same craft:

As . for ye thryde yu iioost kiiow yat 8· maner of diuerse case may liappe iii yis craft / The profet of yis Craft is to telle wlieii a iioinber is multiplied be a iiooyer qwat commys yere of (f. 153^v, 20-25).

V.4. The *punctus*

The *punctus* is found to have two positions in *The Crafte of Nombrynge*, at the baseline and in the middle. It is the most common symbol in *The Crafte of Nombrynge*, with 332 instances. Notably significant is the fact that the writer employs this mark to either introduce or circumscribe numerals; however, these instances have not been considered in our classification below.

A close reading of the text reveals that the *punctus* has a wide variety of uses. In Zecman's words, "its function cannot be described in terms of grammar and syntax only [...] It

may separate phrase from phrase, clause from clause, main statement from qualifying clause, or it may end a sentence" (1956: 14). Accordingly, the function of the *punctus* is threefold, that is, sentential, clausal and phrasal; this leads us to observe that the writer had a drastically different concept of sentence to the one we have nowadays, which is of a more far-reaching nature. An attempt to read this piece of prose shows that "he does not end each subject-predicate group neatly, but rather links it to a following series of sentences which amplify or expand the description" (Arakelian, 1975: 617). The *punctus*, therefore, plays a central role in this characteristic flow of writing as it is the device used to transmit all kinds of relations. The different uses of the *punctus* will be accounted for below.

V.4.1. The *punctus* at sentence level

This is the most widespread use of the *punctus* in *The Crafte of Nombrynge* with 297 instances. Its function is grammatical because the writer uses it either to separate or to connect sense-units. Even though grammatical punctuation is the dominant function of the *punctus* here, there are also cases in which it may occur rhetorically. As they are undoubtedly less common, these will be commented in our description below. This use of the *punctus* may be further subdivided as follows.

a) To mark the end of an utterance: in the following instances, the writer is dealing with subtraction and the *punctus* marks the completion of the two examples offered as illustrations:

[...] whan you hast alle subtrayd ye yat hier iioinber here yis schalle be ye iioinbre here foloyiig whan yu hast subtrayd (f. 145^v, 3-6).

Aiid yen schal yu haue an Ensampulle aȝeyn loke & se & but yu liaue yis same yu hase myse wroȝt (f. 146^r, 10-13).

b) To mark the end of a sense-unit:

The *figure* of 3 yat hase yis schape 3 betokeiis ten tyines inore yeii he schuld & lie stode yere yat ye figure of 4 stondes yat is thretty. The *figure* of 6 ytt hase yis schape 6 betokeiis ten tyines more yan he schuld & he stode yere as ye figure of 3 stondes for yere lie scliuld tokyiie bot sixty & iiow he betokeiis ten tyines more yat is sex hundryth (f. 137^r, 11-18).

Aiid write ye articuls in ye lyft side yf yat liit be a digit write yere a digit yf yat hit be a composit write ye digit of ye composit Aiid ye articul in ye lyft side (f. 159^r, 20-24).

c) To introduce juxtaposed sentences:

[...] ffor yermore yu inost kiow & take gode liede iii quych side yu schalle be gyn in yis craft or ellis yu inayst spyl alle yi laber yere a bouthe certeyn yu schalt be gyn iii the lyft side iii yis Craft thenke wel oucr yis verse (f. 146^v, 6-12).

d) To introduce coordinate clauses:

Aiid write yere the digit of ye Composyt Aiid set ye articul of ye composit next

aftē ye digit in ye same rewe yf *yere* be no ino figures after. But yf yerc be mo figuris after yat digit. Aiid yeie he schalle be rekeiid for hyin selfe. And when yu schalt adde yat ylke figure yat herys yat articulle ouer his lied to ye figure viider hym [...] (f. 141^r, 19-26).

e) To introduce subordinate clauses (nominal, adjectival and adverbial): see, for instance, how the *punctus* is acting as a conjunctive device between the verb *know* and the nominal clause itself, especially because there happens to be an embedded relative clause in-between.

[...] kiow yu aftur ye Sorsayd rewles yat I sayd a fore. yat yere heii thre spices of number. Oone is a digit A noyer is aii Articul. & ye toyer a Composyt. (f. 138^r, 10-14).

Adjectival subordination, in turn, is also punctuated, irrespective of the type of relativization (restrictive or non-restrictive). It is significant, however, that the punctuation of these types of clauses is not as consistent as the ones above, as there are many more unpunctuated instances in the text. The first two instances show examples of a restrictive and a non-restrictive relative clause while the last one shows a sentential relative. The writer's ultimate intention here is unequivocal as more often than not he makes use of the *punctus* especially in those cases where ambiguity may arise. For instance, in the second example the *punctus* is separating the first *yat*, which is a demonstrative, from the second, which is the relativizer itself, having two basic purposes: to avoid possible grammatical ambiguity on the one hand, and as a clue to read it with the appropriate intonation. In this same fashion, in the third instance we also observe how this symbol is used to signal the end of a relative clause and avoid the likely association of the phrase *of a cifer*, as the preposition depends on the verb of the subordinate clause:

[...] yu schal vnderstonde yat multiplicacion is a bryiigiige to gedur of ·2· thynges in oii nombur. ye quyeli oii nombur contynes so moii tymes on. howe inoii tymes *yere* ben viiytes iii ye nowmber of yat 2 (f. 153^r, 26-29 and f. 153^v, 1-2).

[...] *yere* fore do a way yat. yat is odde ye quyeli is ·1· yeii leues ·4· (f. 149^v, 21-22).

[...] & sett iii ye saine place of ye quyeli place yu toket hym of a cifer for he was bot ·1· (f. 144^r, 25-27).

The punctuation of adverbial subordination, in turn, is more consistent than in relative clauses, totalling 45 instances. This mark of punctuation appears with all types of clauses —of time, cause, result, contrast, manner, condition, comparison, etc. See the following examples:

Aiid so forthe towarde ye lyfi syde of ye tabul or of ye boke yat ye figures beie writene In. til yat yu come to the last figure yat is called a cifre. (f. 136^v, 31-34).

ffurthermore he inost vnderstonde yat in yis craft ben vsid teei figurys. as here beie writen Sor ensampul. O ·9· 8 ·7· 6 ·5· 4 ·3· 2 ·1· (f. 136^r, 15-17).

¶ Aiid yis rewle is generale for alle maner of articuls. Whethir yai he hundryth or

powsant: but yu inost know well ye craft of ye wryrhyngye in ye tabulle or you kiiow to do yus in yi inynde aftur yis rewle (f. 162^v, 25-28 and f. 163^r: 1-2).

This same symbol is also used to mark off the fronting of a subordinate clause, as in the following instance:

[...] wliaii yu hast a iioinbei- to write: loke fyrst wliat maner noinbei- it ys yat yu schalt write whether it be a digit or a coinposit or aii Articul (f. 138^r, 17-21).

f) To introduce a sequential marker:

[...] yu most know yat ye profet of yis craft is to telle wliat is ye hole nombur yat coines of diuerse nomburis: Now as to ye texte of oure verse. he teches there how yu schal worcli in yis craft (f. 140^r, 23-27).

g) To call attention to what comes next:

Expoiiie yis verse. A cifre tokeiis no3t bot he inakes ye figure to betoken yat coines after hym more yaii he schuld (f. 137^v, 5-7).

¶ This is ye Cliapre of subtraccioii in tlie quyeli you inost kiiow foure iiesessary thynges: tlie first wliat is subtraccion ye secuiide is how inoiiy numbers you inost haue to subtraccioii tlie thiryd is how inoiiy inaiiers of cases yere may happe iii yis craft of subtraccioii Tlie fourte is qwat is ye profet of yis craft (f. 142^v, 9-15).

h) To enunierate:

¶ Herc telles yat yere bene ·7· spices or partes of yis craft: Tlie first is called ·addicion· ye secuiide is called subtraccioii Tlie thiryd is called duplacion: Tlie 4· is called dimydicion: Tlie ·5· is called multiplicacion: Tlie 6· is called diuision Tlie 7· is called extraccioii of ye Rote . (f. 139^v, 8-14).

i) To mark off direct speech (especially for questions and answers): in these cases the scribe systematically makes use of the *punctus* to circumscribe the question itself, both initially and finally. The leading function of this mark is rhetorical as it is a clue for the reader to read it appropriately. Note also that the *punctus* may appear together with the *paraph*.

Expoiiie ye too versus a fore yis pi-cseiiit craft ys called *Algorismus* in ye quyeli we vse teen figurys of Inde: Questio: ¶ Wliy teii fyguris of Inde: Solucio: for as I liaue sayd a fore yai were fonde fyrst in liide of a kynge of yat Cuiitre yat was called Algor (f. 136^r, 18-21 and f. 137^r, 1-2).

¶ Questio: In quyeli syde sittes ye first figure: Solucio: for sothe loke quich figure is first in ye ry3t side of ye bok or of ye tabul (f. 136^r: 5-8).

j) To separate the members of a comparison:

[...] *yu schal vnderstonde yat multiplicacion is a bryngynge to gedur of ·2· thynges in on nombur· ye quyeli on iiouinbur continyes so inony tyines on· howe inony tyiiies yere ben vnytees in ye nowmber of yat 2 (f. 153^r, 26-29 aiid f. 153^v, 1-2).*

[...] *yen loke liow inony cifers schuld go be fore yat oii articuls and he were write· Als mony cifers schuld go be fore yat otlier & he were write of cifers· (f. 161^v, 23-27).*

K4.2. The punctus at clause / phrase level

The *punctus* is also used to indicate intra-clausal relations: to introduce appositive phrases, to highlight an important constituent, to connect juxtaposed/coordinate phrases as well as to mark off the clause elements (subject and verb, vrb and complements, etc.). The most immediate function of this mark is grammatical, the writer wanting to signal some sort of relationship between the clause constituents. The only exception is that of appositions, whose function could be both grammatical and rhetorical because a pause is implied.

Statistically and compared with other mediaeval prose compositions where these uses are rather frequent (Rodríguez-Álvarez, 1999: 35-42; Alonso-Almeida, 2002: 218-222; Calle-Martín, 2004b: 420-421), its occurrence is quite limited in MS Egerton 2622, where the scribe is more concerned with sentential boundaries. The different uses are reported below:

a) To introduce appositions:

Somme number is called articulul latine· Aii Articul in englys· Some number is called a coinposyt in englys· (f. 138^r, 7-10).

And yis one number schalle be called numerus multiplicans· Anglice ye noinber multipliynge for he schalle multiply ye hyer iiounber (f. 154^r, 12-15).

b) To mark off the clause constituents:

§ *As for ye secuiide you inost know yat you schialt haue tweyne rewes of figures. on vndur a nother as here yu iiiayst se· (f. 140^r, 18-20).*

[...] *loke liow iiiiiytes ben . by twene ye more digit and 10· (f. 154^v, 6-7).*

c) To highlight an important element of the clause:

The first is called ·addicion· ye secunde is called subtraccion· (f. 139^v, 9-10).

d) To link juxtaposed/coordinate phrases:

Compositys ben noinbers yat bene coinpoiit of a digyt & of an articulle as fourtene fyftene· sextene· & such oyer· (f. 138^v, 1-3).

Likewise, the *punctus* has been found to express intraphrasal relations to separate the elements of the phrase and to indicate abbreviations, as in the following cases:

§ As · for ye thryde yu inost kiow yat 8 · inaner of diuerse case may liappe iii yis craft . (f. 153^v, 20-22).

[...] write such a inerke as is here · w · vpoii his hede ye quych inerke schal betoken halfe of ye odde yat was take a way · (f. 149^v, 15-18).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

In this study we have focused our attention on Steele's edition of MS Egerton 2622 to show the number of mistranscriptions that it contains. It goes without saying, therefore, that editions like this one should not be recommended as primary sources for philological research. A call is made in this paper for trustworthy editions which offer a clear-cut picture of the original manuscript as originally composed.

On the grounds of punctuation, in our opinion, modern editors should pay more attention to the actual use of marks so that their transcriptions could be used for palaeographic and linguistic research. If the rendering needs to be modernized for publication, as seems to be the policy nowadays, a previous analysis of the scribal practice is recommended so as to ascertain the different uses of punctuation marks in the work being edited. This analysis will allow the editor to spot the different relationships of the symbols, whether sentential, clausal or phrasal, hence leading to a more consistent rendering. In this fashion, depending on the ultimate function of each symbol, the modern editor only needs to provide the most appropriate equivalent in modern punctuation. In such a way, Steele's shortcomings, for instance, could have been avoided systematically.

To sum up, in our view, analyses of this kind are actually a must prior to the task of editing itself so that the final version, if modernized, has a coherent system of punctuation. There are, however, scholars who still question the importance of scribal punctuation. Reinier, for instance, argues that "there is little literature on mediaeval 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 (since usually the pointing is not authorial anyway)" (Reinier, 1998). Whether authorial or not, the study of punctuation is a need for the following reasons. The first has to do with the scribes' systematicity in the use of marks of punctuation as there are structures which are always pointed, hence leading us to think that there was a consistent and orderly punctuation system at the time. The second has to do with the underlying function of mediaeval punctuation which, in our opinion, is of a prosodical nature. This issue is still under-researched and, in the long run, the publication of other approaches of this kind will allow us not only to have a more comprehensive account of the scribal practices concerning punctuation, but also to obtain a wider perspective on the relationship between prosody and punctuation.

NOTES

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2. All the instances reproduced below come from our own transcription wherein abbreviations have been silently expanded in italics.

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