

Anglicana Book Hands 1350-1450

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Gothic cursive hands were used in England as early as the 12th century in England, coming over from the French chanceries, but developed their own variations. Cursive hands grew in use after arriving on British shores because they were easier to write than the more precise gothic hands. Gothic Quadrata and Precisus have letterforms with very upright strokes with diamond-shaped or crisply horizontal bases as if the terminal feet had been cut off. The twisting strokes to create the square feet of Precisus and the extra terminals and split serifs of Quadrata take more time, and often more space, than the smaller, slanted cursive letters as can be seen in Figure 1 below. The Anglicana variations covered in this class are taken from 14th and 15th century manuscripts found online in [Simple search of the British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts \(bl.uk\)](https://www.bl.uk/collection-development/simple-search).

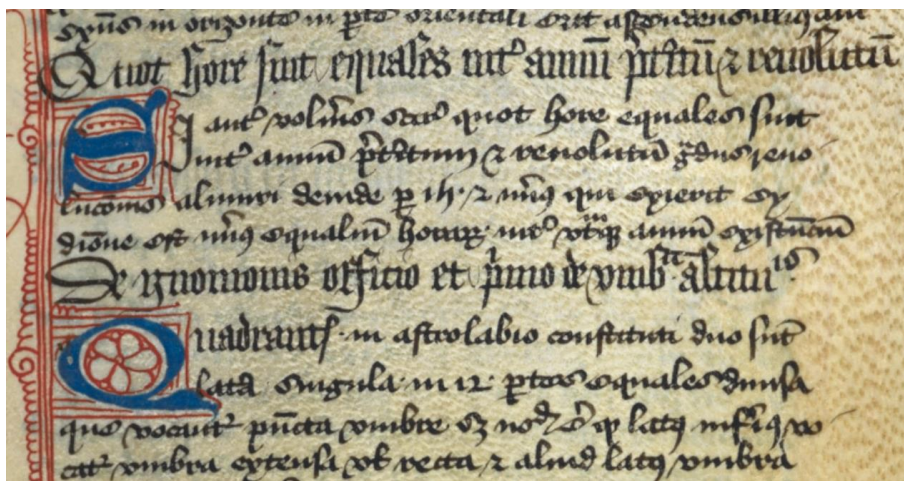
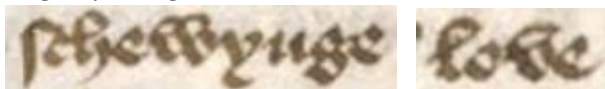


Figure 1. Section from Additional 17716 f.11 (1400-1425) showing both Quadrata and Cursive forms.

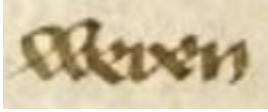
Because of the nature of human biodynamics, the precise letter forms of such hands as Textura Quadrata and Textura Precisus will develop into cursive styles as scribes created works of lower status that required smaller spaces and shorter production time. As in modern writing, the pen is more likely to glide from one letter to the next in cursive hands. For some scribes, the cursive elements are limited to a few letters, such as the clubs or “elephant trunks” on ascenders. For others, the end of one minim glides smoothly into the next. The number of contractions and cursive elements were, however, much more common in the later documentary hands which needed to be completed at considerable speed.

Some examples:

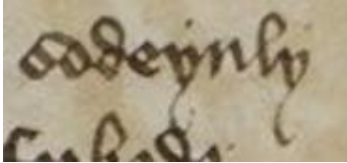
- The words “schewynge” and “love” (Egerton 2006) shows the quintessentially English w and the single v. These forms of the letters are used both for minuscules and capitals with the level of swooping flourish varying from scribe to scribe. In some cases, the two Vs in the letter are more distinctly drawn, but in this example, you can see the hairlines connecting the strokes into a single spiraling movement.



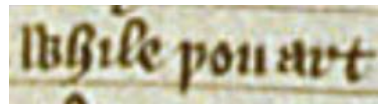
- The word “weren” (Harley 4826 f.1) shows the looping connections in the w even more clearly.



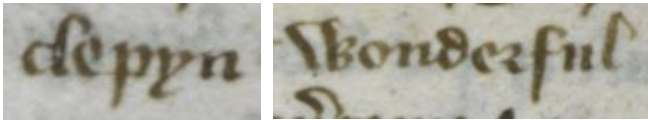
- The word “sodeynly” (Royal 17 D VI f.39v) has a continuous stroke for the n, l, and first portion of the y at the end of the word. Again, hairlines linking the letters can be clearly seen.



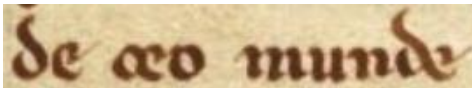
- Although this scribe used a more vertical and less flowing W, the phrase “while [th]ou art” (Royal 18 C XXII f.91) shows the connecting line from the i to the l in “while” and an almost continuous stroke from the e in while to the thorn in [th]ou.



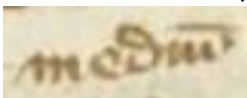
- Be careful when scanning for examples of the letter d. The word “clepyn” from Additional 37577 f.61v shows a ligature of CL that looks very much like the more Italianate d used in modern type. Compare to the d in “wonderful” from the same page. The “w” in wonderful here, shows a hybrid of sorts between the spiraling and more upright w forms.



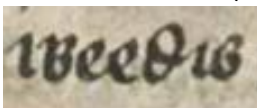
- The phrase “de ceo munde” (Additional 46919) from the first half of the 14th century shows the d from which the looped d developed. In this case, the d is two distinct strokes: (1) the c stroke and (2) the diagonal ascender. The looping d goes directly from the c stroke to the start of the ascender without lifting the pen. Later variations have the diagonal section curl inward rather than meeting back with the lower part of the c stroke.



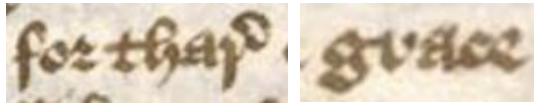
- The word “med[iu]m” (Harley 625, f.23v), like “soddenly” and “world” above, shows that the figure-8 d can be a single stroke that goes into the next letter. In this example, the base of the minims in both m’s also seem to be continuous strokes and the hook on the end of the first m looks to flow directly into the e.



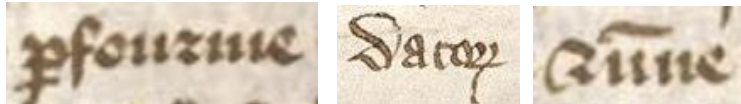
- The word “weeds” (Sloane 6- f.13) also shows the d flow into the following i.



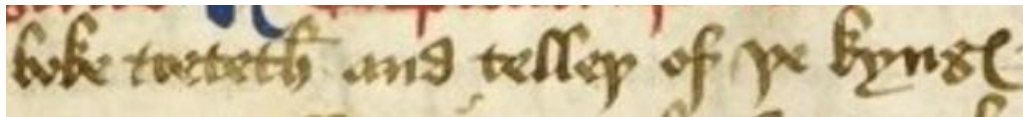
When creating a ductus from an exemplar, look for the individual letters, but also look for the ways that the letters work together in different situations. For example, “or” and “re” in “for thare”, and “ra” in “grace” show three different forms of the letter r.



Common abbreviations include the crossed p for “per” or “par” as in “perfourme” and a letter that looks a bit like a crossed y for “orum” or “arum” as in “Dacorum”. Other abbreviations have a line over the place where the missing letters would have been as for the ee in “Queen”.



Also, be aware of archaic letters like the thorn [th] that looks very much like the letter y. Scribes using Anglicana hands often used both “th” and the thorn interchangeably as in Harley 4826 f.1 “boke treteth and telle[th] of [th]e kynge”.



The following two pages are collections of letterforms from Egerton 2006 and Royal 17 which I use when practicing these hands. After that, I have small sections of several manuscripts complete with transliterations for the manuscripts written in English.

References

British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts: Simple Search. [Search results from the British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts \(bl.uk\)](#) Last accessed, 06/10/2023.

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Examples of the letterforms to use in creating a ductus:

Egerton 2006

A a a a a be be be be ce a co: co: ce de de de
A la ab au az be be be bu ch: ch: da da di dy

e e e e te te ff fe ff for fy nge use gh ghy gi
er der er re re of of of of of gv gz egy ngy gy

ho ho holye hit ght thi th sche
tha that the the thy sche j u it cia i will
m m m m m

le le la la li lo ela ele m m ma ma me
le le all alle ill lye ly me mez mo my

n an an en ene om nng o o o lo lor oz au ju
nu nit yue yug uge ny ou ode loo loo

p po ep pa pra der are ere ore dra for sta fyr yry
op pt pt py reli fer erie tri vrs eyr layr yer yr

sa s: sa sa so spy sy as es cou: uo: t thi th to thy
sche sht se seu psa laste sacbles als als ty itt ytte at

u sul full sud su by og ag ae we wre w: wa wa w:
cous our: ou se ana oter lobe wh hotte wy wre

ay gy ky ye ys ze p y: pay
my py vy tyt lye

An And a fa
Age and to at

Bar bar
be be ab

de ode ade da ide
nd dv ord od rd

e en e e esse
ce e ecte

of of fader fad
lfa for for foo

g go go go god
gght gy god go

he the ha th ch
th th ho ho oh

1 1 it 1 hi
m it tid ai hile

le le le le le
le le ile le le
le le ile lall

am ma ma mo
me me me ome

No ent om amt
na and ne ne no

o on to not so
goode for yo lord

pet spe pe
e do o be
pfo pr pr

quite

foo foo ev ord cord
bare ave ert oz moy

de ce co oh spe
gras is is no

the th th th th
ete eti tent ette to

unto aboute honre
thno thnt pntte

ift esse esse seest

seven heben
euevy saue

Edas Edent Edulle Eduth Edord
Edhen Edhere Edhules Edrote

yoed
oed

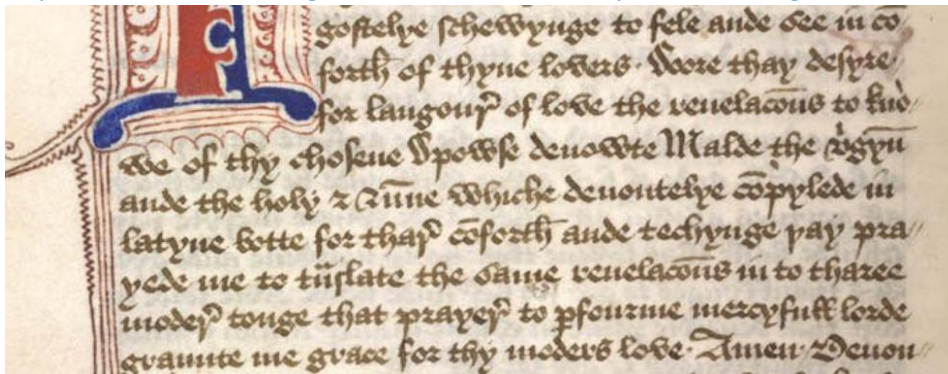
my ye gyde day myne pray yom

Almyghty oodeynly declyne prynce

Exemplars (I have provided transliterations for the manuscripts examples written in English.)

1. Egerton 2006 Mechtild of Hackeborn, Liber specialis gratiae (the Booke of Gostlye Grace) (English. Use of both the thorn and th, terminal r and re, lifted s for ous, long s in word and short s as terminal, capitals of S, W, A, D). Another page from the Egerton 2006 manuscript is provided at the end of this handout.

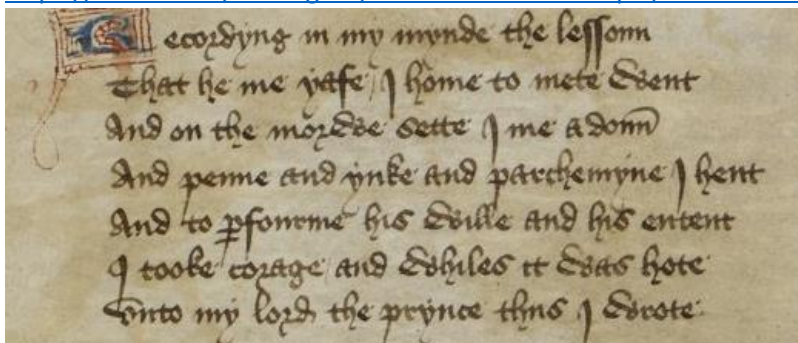
<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMINBig.ASP?size=big&IIID=18128>



gostelye shewyng to fele and see in co-
forth of thyne lovers. Were thay desire
for langoure of love the revelacions to kno
we of thy chosen spowse denowte Malde the v[ir]gyn
and the holy Q[ue]nne whiche devoutelye co[m]pylede in
Latyne bot for thar[e] co[m]forth and techynge [th]ay pra//
yede me to túrlate the same revelac[i]ons into tharee
moder tonge that prayer to p[er]fourme mercyfull lorde
graunte me grace for thy moders love. Amen. Devou

2. Royal 17 D VI f.39v (English. Tall a, hook on h)

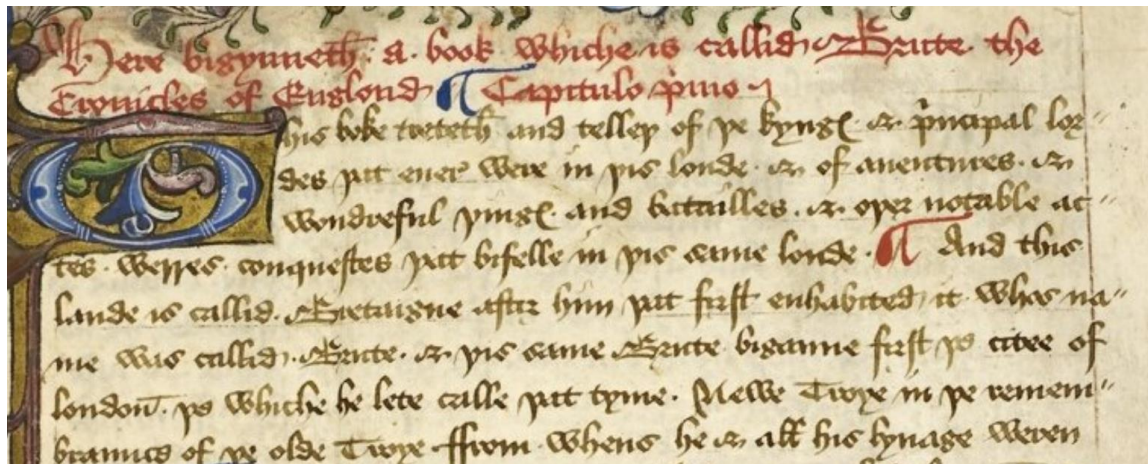
<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IIID=47692>



Recordyng in my mynde the lesson
that he me yafe I home to mete went
And on the morwe sette I me adonn
And penne and ynke and parchemyne I bent
And to performe his will and his entent
I tooke corage and whyles it was hote
Unto my lord the prynce this I wrote

3. Harley 4826 f.1 (English. The Prose Brut Chronicle of England to 1419.)

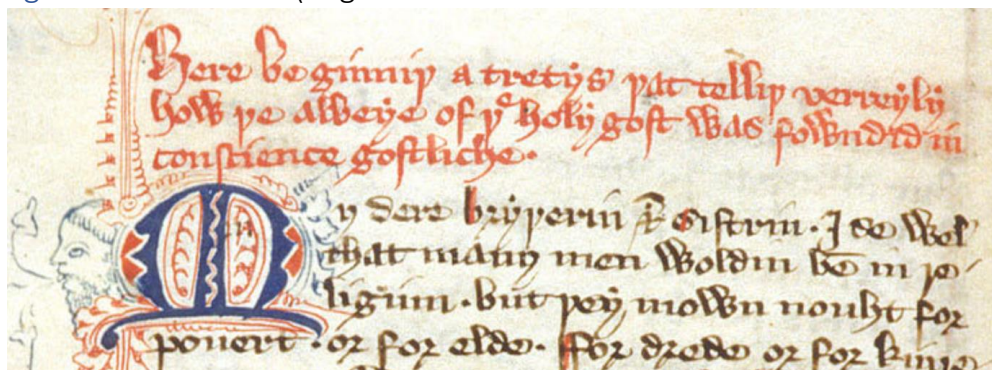
<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMINBig.ASP?size=big&IllID=25858>



Here bigynneþ a booke whiche is callid Brute the Cronicles of Englonde ¶ Capitulo primo

This boke treteth and telle[th] of [th]e kynges or principal lordes [th]at ever were in [th]is lond · or of aventures or wonderful [th]ynges · and batailles · or o[th]er notable actes · werres · conquestes [th]at bifelle in [th]is same lond · ¶ And this lande is callid · Bretaigne after him [th]at first enhabited it whos name was callid · Brute · or [th]is same Brute biganne first [th]is citee of London · [th]is whiche he lete calle [th]at tyme · Newe Troye in [th]e remembrance of [th]e olde Troye from whens he or all his lynage weren

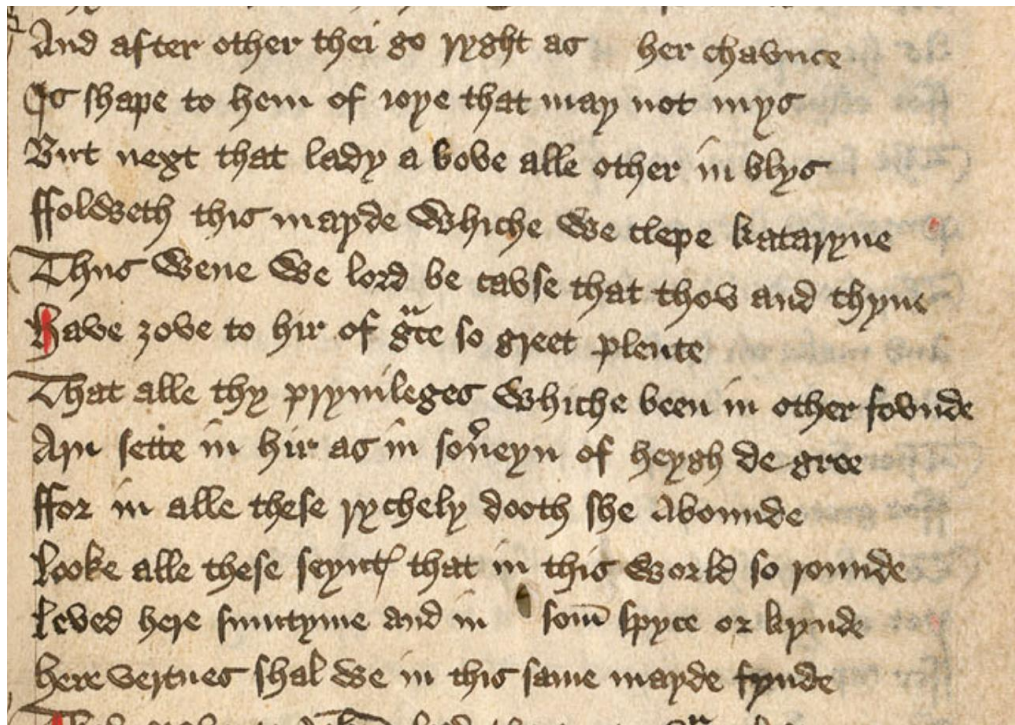
4. Egerton 3245 f.156v (English.



Here bogynny[th] a tretys [th]at telli[th] verreyly how [th]e abbeye of [th]e holy gost was fowndid in Conscience gostliche

My ders bry[th]erin {and} sistrin · I se wel that many men woldin be in religiun · but [th]ey mowen nought for pouert · for eld · for drede or for kynges

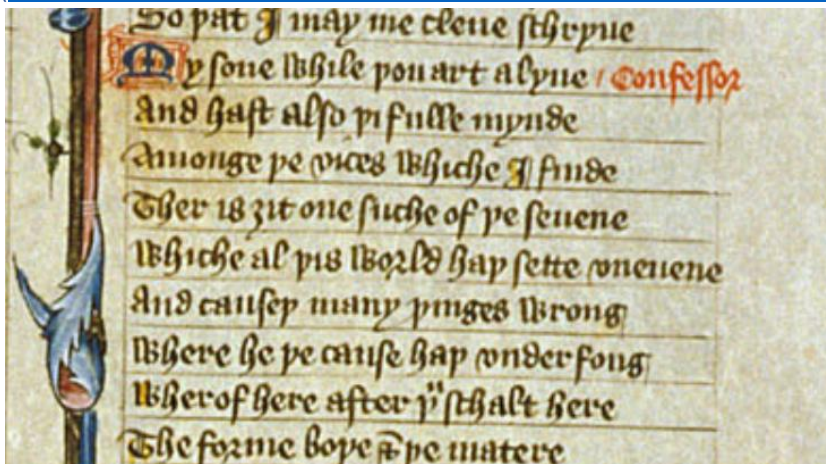
5. [Arundel 396 f.1 \(John Capgrave, and others, The Life of Catherine \(ff. 1-117v\), etc. \(English. Double f at start of words, very curved w, "or" and "ry" ligatures, u and v the same letter, https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=2738](https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=2738)



And after other thei go right as her chauce
 Go shape to hem of ioye that may not mys
 But next that lady a bove alle other in blys
 folweth this mayde which we clepe Kataryne
 Thus wene we lorde be cause that thou and thyne
Have [z]ove to her of g{if}te so greet plete
 That all thy pryvileges which been in other founde
 Are sette in her as in soneyn of heygh de gree
 for in all these richely dooth she abounde
 Looke all these seynts that in this world so rounde
 Leved here sumtyme and in some spyce or kynde
 here vertues shal we in this same mayde fynde

6. Royal 18 C XXII f.91 (English. Use of thorn and th, z as almost starting y sound, compare this w to those in the previous manuscripts.)

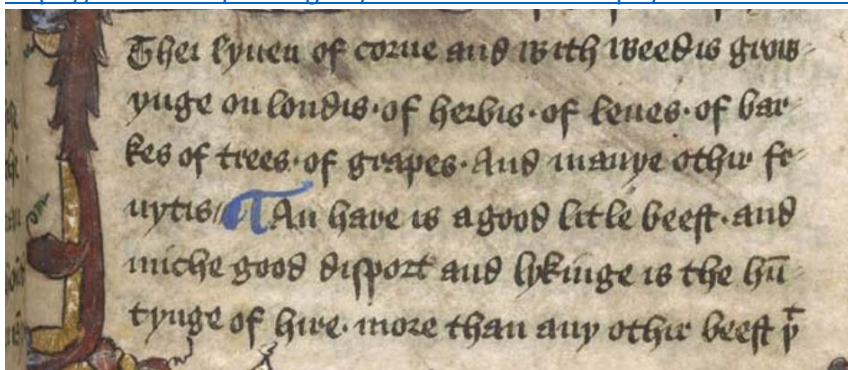
<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMINBig.ASP?size=big&IIID=40760>



Sp [th]at I may be clene thryue
 My sone while you art alive / Confessor
 and hast also [th]i fulle mynde
 amonge [th]e vices whiche I finde
 ther is [z]it one of suche of [th]e seuene
 whiche al [this] world ha[th] sette uneuene
 and cause[th] many [th]inges wrong
 where he [th]e cause ha[th] underfong
 whereof here afater [th]{u} shsalte here
 The forme bo[th] {and} [th]e matere

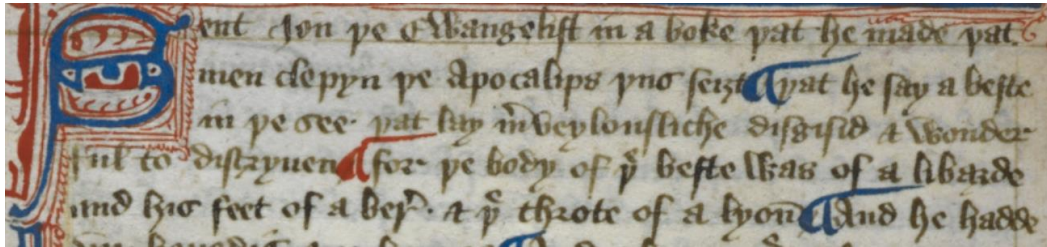
7. Sloane 60 f.13

<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IIID=7199>



Thei liven of corne and with weedis grow
 yuge on londis · of herbis · of benes · of bar
 kes of trees · of grapes · and manye other fr
 uytis Tan have is a good little beest · and
 mucche good disport and lykinge is the hu
 tinge of hire · more than any other beest [th]{a}t

8. Additional 37577 f.61v

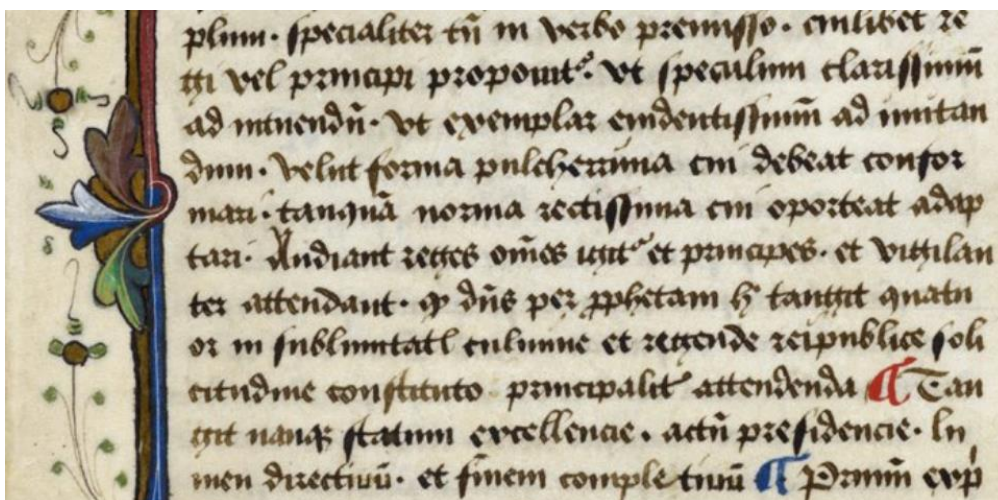


Sicut Jon [th]e Ewangelist in a boke [th]at he made [th]at men clepyn [th]e Apocalips [th]us sei[z]t [th]at he say a beste in [th]e see [th]at say in beylongliche(?) disgisid a wonder ful to distryuen for [th]e body of [th]e beste was of a libarde and his feet of a bere & [th]e throte of a lyon. And he hadde

9. Sloane 990 f.201v (Latin. Shows the stroke from previous to elephant tongue on next.)
<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=7126>

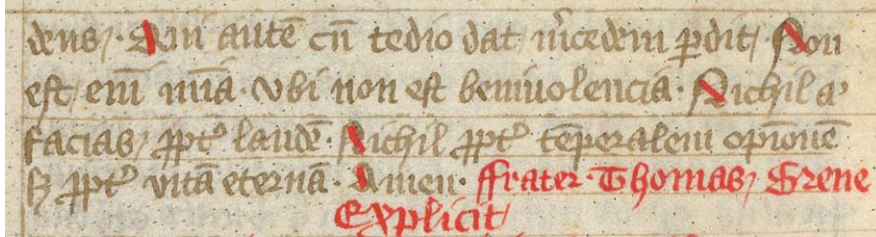


10. Royal 12 D XV f.23 (Latin with foliate initial)
<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=41677>



11. Sloane 1627 (Latin. Loops on b h l, half r. Scribe Brother Thomas Grene.)

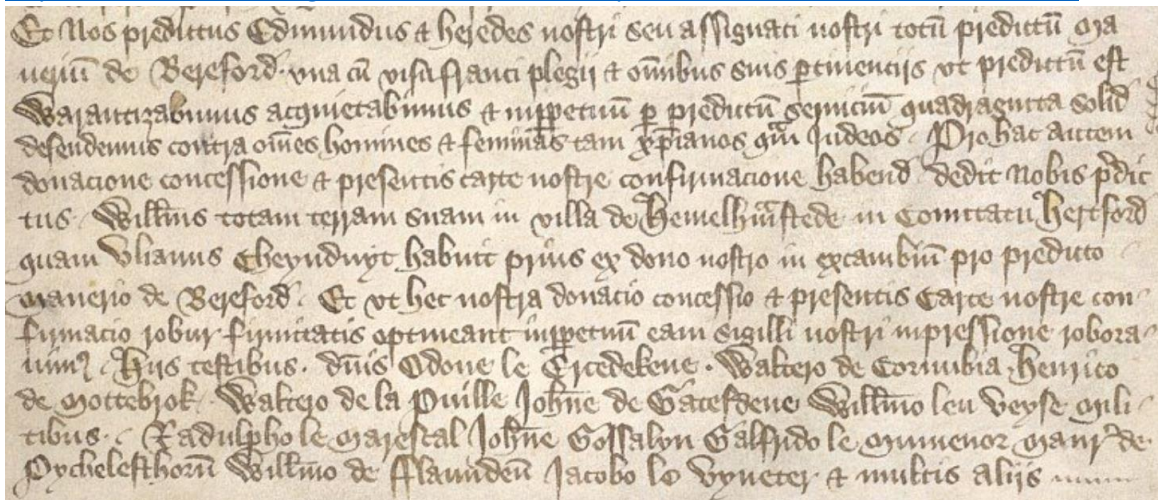
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12. Stowe 882 f.4

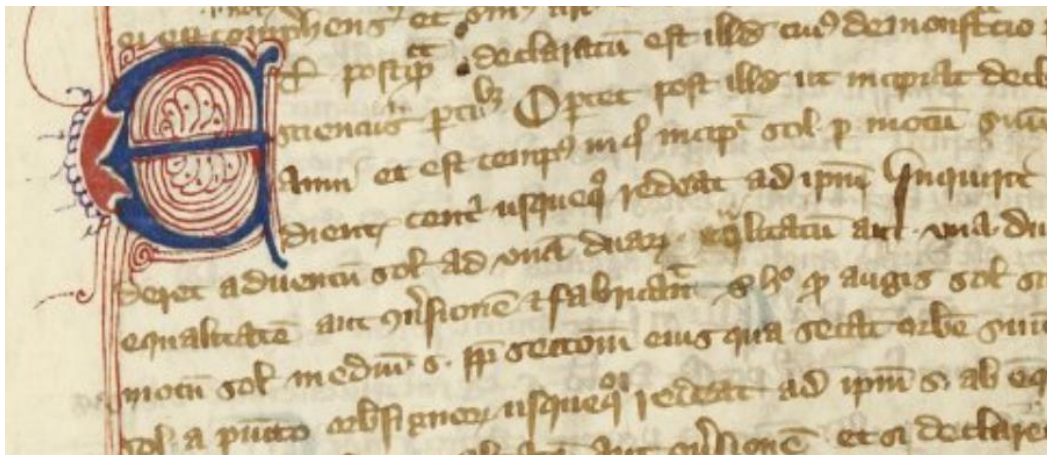
(Latin. Good examples of E, B, G, and W at start and end of words, both types of gm terminal re.)

<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=3846>



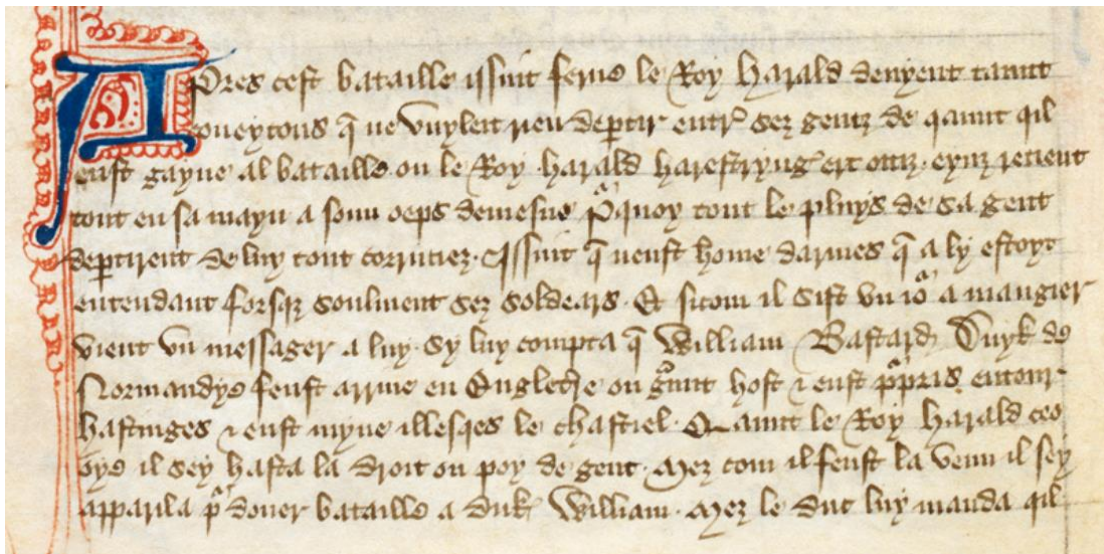
13. Harley 625 f.23v (Latin. beginning of book 3 of Geber's 'De astronomia'. Numerous instances of the clubs on l, f, b, h flowing from previous words. Figure-8 d as single stroke. Contraction.)

<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMINBig.ASP?size=big&IllID=24816>



14. Additional 18462 (French)

<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMINBig.ASP?size=big&IllID=57661>



15. Egerton 2622 f.2 (England. Mathematical and other treatises, including Chaucer's Treatise of the astrolabe and Godfridus super Palladium).

<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=9100&CollID=28&NStart=2622>

