A Companion to the English Version of J. Liébault's *Treatise on the Diseases of Women*

A Companion to the English Version of J. Liébault's *Treatise on the Diseases of Women*:

MS Hunter 303

By

Soluna Salles Bernal

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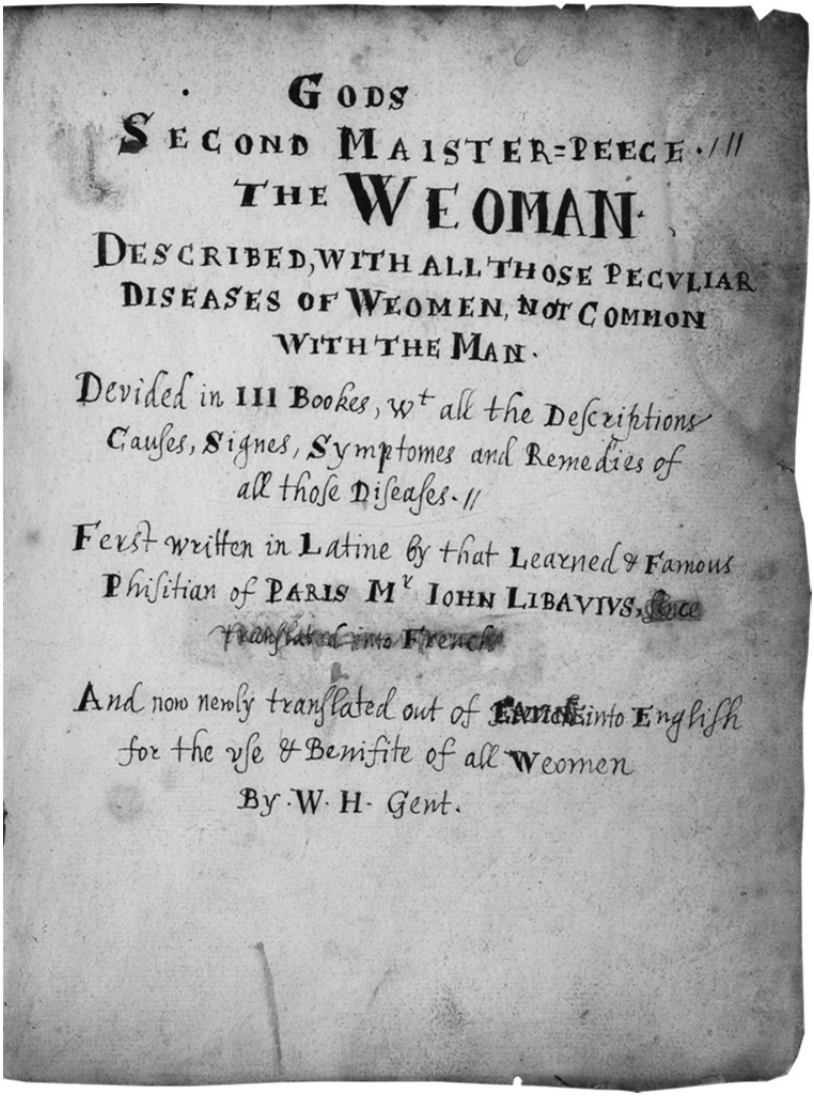
To all women, to all mothers, to my dearest friends LCP.



GODS
SECOND MAISTER-PEECE ///
THE WEOMAN.
DESCRIBED, WITH ALL THOSE PECVLIAR DISEASES OF WEOMEN, NOT COMMON WITH THE MAN.
Devided in III Bookes, wt all the Descriptions Causes, Signes, Symptomes and Remedies of all those Diseases. //
Fevst written in Latine by that Learned & Famous Phisitian of PARIS Mr IOHN LIBAVIVS, since translated into French
And now newly translated out of [illegible] into English for the vse & Bemifite of all Weomen
By W. H. Gent.

Title page from MS Hunter 303 (University of Glasgow Library. Special Collections)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

c.	*circa*
cancell.	cancellation
del.	deletion
EmodE	Early Modern English
f.	folio
ff.	folios
ME	Middle English
MS Hunter 303	Glasgow University Library, Hunter Collection, Liébault's *Treatise on the Diseases of Women*
OE	Old English
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
out. marg.	outer margin
p.	page
PDE	Present-day English
pp.	pages
r.	recto
rep.	repetition
v.	verso

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CHAPTER ONE

THE MANUSCRIPT

The present chapter describes the manuscript witness, by considering the source and content of the volume, as well as its codicological and palaeographic analysis. Although of a considerable extension, the manuscript is highly homogeneous in style and organization. A sample page of MS Hunter 303 (pp. 1-958) is reproduced so as to provide the reader with an image of the original.

1.1. Source and Contents

The Early Modern Period supposed a revolution in many political, socio-cultural and scientific aspects. As far as the latter is concerned, the medical field experienced an unprecedented boost as a consequence of the development of new technologies and the change from the scholastic to the empiric scientific paradigm. The expansion of medical science was accompanied and promoted by the proliferation of medical writing materials, enhanced, in turn, by two synergic factors. On the one hand, the spread of the printing press, which facilitated the divulgation of the medical prose until then restricted to high-learned contexts; and, on the other, the increasing demand for vernacular texts, whose main sources were Latin and French treatises.

The vernacularization of medical writing entailed the introduction of an important amount of morpho-syntactic, lexical and discursive elements into English, particularly Latin and French. The source texts object of vernacularization were for the most part still based on classical medicine and supported by a scholastic thought-style. This knowledge clashed with the emergence of the empirical paradigm fostered by new discoveries in the fields of anatomy and physiology.

In this context, some authors and practitioners began to modify the classical perspective by gradually introducing a modern approach, based on observation and experience. Thus, while the humoral theory was still used to explain the physiological changes of the body, the Galenic one-sex model started to be questioned (Churchill 2005, 3). In this line, a pioneering treatise

devoted to the diseases of women was written by the French physician Jean Liébault at the end of the 16th century, and anonymously translated into English during the following century, being preserved in its unique handwritten copy, which constitutes the focus of this study.

The manuscript translated version is housed in the Hunterian Collection at the Glasgow University Library, referenced as MS Hunter 303. The book entitled, as in the source, *Trois Livres Appartenant aux Infirmitez et Maladies des Femmes*, was written by Jean Liébault and translated into English by W. H. Gent[leman] (Young and Aitken 1908, 243–44). The present edition includes the complete treatise, which is organized into three books as follows: *The First Booke* (pp. 1-144), *The Second Booke* (pp. 145-575) and *The Third Booke* (pp. 578-958). In addition, a title-page (f. 1r), a preface by the translator (ff. 2r-4r) and a table of contents (ff. 5r-8v) precede the volume.[1]

The book, classified as a specialized treatise (Taavitsainen et al. 2011, 23), is devoted to the description and treatment of the diseases and conditions affecting women, focusing mainly on questions related to reproduction and birth. Thus, the first book deals with general diseases of women, particularly young and unmarried women, e.g. *swooning, panting of the heart*; the second book is concerned with infertility in married women, but also in men; and finally, the third book details questions related to conception, pregnancy and childbirth.

The English translation comes from the original French version written by the physician Jean Liébault, first published in 1852.[2] As a curiosity, the word "French" has been obliterated and altered into the word "Latin" in the title page and in the preface of the manuscript (see f. 1r and in f. 3v in Fig. 1). This modification, probably performed in a later revision of the manuscript, could have been carried out to provide the rendering with a prestigious condition.[3]

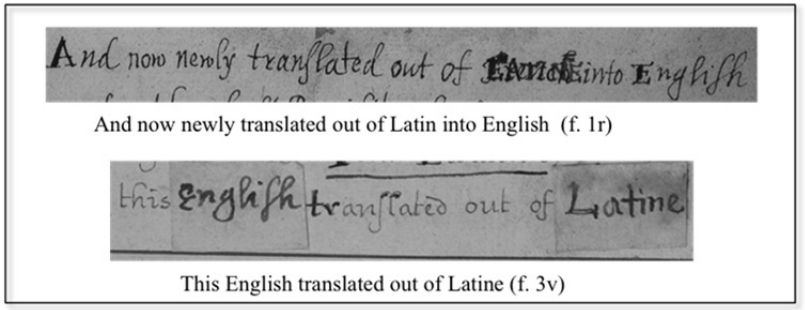

Figure 1. *Alteration* and *emendation* of the word "French" into "Latine"

Jean Liébault (1535-1596) was a doctor in medicine and an agronomist born in Dijon, and married to Charles Estienne's daughter, Nicole (Bourbon 2010).[4] Liébault translated and adapted his father-in-law's book, *Praedium Rusticum,* published in French as *La Maison* Rustique, which was, in turn, translated into English by Richard Surflet in 1600 (Cooke 1981, 42). His second book, *Trois Livres Appartenans aux Infirmitez et Maladies des Femmes*, was an adaptation and extension of Giovanni Marinello's *Le Medicine Partenenti alle Infermità delle Donne,* first published in Venice by Francesco de' Franceschi in 1563 (Young and Aitken 1908, 244). Liébault added to this material his personal experience as a physician to create the comprehensive volume that occupies this study.[5] His work is recognized as a precursor in the new medicine, as he rescued the Hippocratic gynaecology that emphasised the specificity of women's condition, traditionally overlooked in Galen's one-sex model (Pomata 2013, 327). As stated by Valerie Worth-Stylianou, the book is "indebted to the Italian Neoplatonic tradition, which celebrated woman's dignity and civilizing influence [… as] Liébault praises the distinctive nature of the female sexual anatomy" (2013, xxiii)

Little is known, however, about the English translator of MS Hunter 303, referred to in the manuscript only with his/her initials as W. H. Gent. The Early Modern period abounded in scientific translations into the European vernacular languages, e.g. from Latin into French and English, from French into English, although the work of translators was not always acknowledged as deserved (Belle and Hosington 2016, 2).

The vernacularization of science is usually described in terms of four stages: the first from 1375 until the introduction of Caxton's printing press in England in 1475; the second phase ending in 1540; the third spanned from 1540 to 1600; and the fourth occurred during the 17th century (Taavitsainen 2010, 33; Taavitsainen and Pähta 1998, 165). In the field of science, medical writing pioneered the translation and adaptation of texts into the vernacular. The turning point in English occurred between 1640 and 1660 when 207 out of 238 medical texts were published in English (Webster, 1976, 267), the 1650s being a "flowering" decade for medical vernacular publishing (Fissell, 2007, 113). Gradually, Latin, the prestigious language of science, yielded ground to English, which was finally established as the *lingua franca* of science from the 18th century onwards.

As far as we have investigated, this is the unique English version of Liébault's work, whether handwritten or printed.[6] It could have been done as a preliminary version for a later printed edition, which finally never came out for unknown reasons. Another option is that the translation was

commissioned by a physician who wanted to have a vernacular version of the treatise for his/her professional use, e.g. academic teaching or practice. Unfortunately, all these are just mere presuppositions as the Hunterian Collection Catalogue does not provide a reference of the provenance of this volume.

The manuscript formerly belonged to the personal library of the renowned Scottish gynaecologist William Hunter (1718-1783). Hunter began his medical studies at Edinburgh and moved to London in 1741, where he practised as a physician and as an obstetrician, gaining a sound reputation. Apart from the medical practice, William Hunter taught surgery and anatomy, becoming a prolific collector of pathological and anatomical specimens, as well as minerals, works of art and books, among other objects.[7] His library, containing more than 10,000 printed books, and over 600 manuscripts, is currently cared for by the Special Collections Department at the Glasgow University Library (Hancock, Pearce, and Campbell 2015). Unfortunately, the provenance of MS Hunter 303, i.e. when and where it was acquired, is not referenced in any of the two catalogues describing the collection (Young and Aitken 1908; Munro 1930), neither in the documents containing data of the Hunter's library, such as his personal correspondence, or the list of books purchased in different auctions.

1.2. Codicology

This section analyses the codicological aspects of the witness, such as material, dimension, ink, quiring, binding, ruling and pagination. These features are the result of an *in situ* examination of the manuscript carried out at Glasgow University Library, together with the information obtained from Young and Aitken's Catalogue (Young and Aitken 1908).

1.2.1. Material and Dimension

MS Hunter 303 is written on brownish, generally well-preserved paper, and bound in a 17th-century limp vellum. The external dimensions of the volume are 215 mm height, 160 mm width and 70 mm thick (at the spine), while each page measures 204 x 156 mm. It can be safely said that the witness is in general in good condition, although the cover and the binding have partially deteriorated, the spine in particular.

1.2.2. Ink

Inks are basically divided into two categories: those containing iron and those which do not. Until about 1500 most writing was performed with the first type of ink, made through a combination of galls, copperas or vitriol, and gum (Beal 2008).[8] The colour of the ink comes from the tannic acid contained in the galls, and it was purplish-black at the beginning turning darker with time (Hector 1980, 19–20). In addition, from the 15th century onwards, carbon was included in iron inks to achieve a more intense blackness.

Dark-brown ink is employed in MS Hunter 303 for all the running text, while margins are drawn in red colour. In some pages the ink has faded out to a light brown tone, which could indicate that iron gall ink was used for the writing, proving that through oxidation this composition changes its colour with time (Petti 1977, 8). In addition, the title, marginalia, some words in the preface and the initials of the table of contents have been highlighted in a bold script, probably by a second hand, using a much darker ink presumably containing carbon.

1.2.3. Quiring

The volume was designed as a quarto scheme, with a typical quire (*quaternario*) of four double sheets (*bifolia*), which is folded and organised producing eight folios or sixteen pages. The size of each page and the distribution of watermarks of the paper match with Gaskell's description of a quarto made from an original sheet of pot (16 x 12 1/2 ins) or foolscap (17 x 13 ins) paper (1972, 85).

The organization of the *bifolia* and quires is assured by the use of catchwords. They were a device commonly used by scribes, consisting of a word written at the bottom right-hand corner of the last leaf of each quire and repeated or taken up at the beginning of the next quire, so as to serve as a guide for binding the sheets (Denholm-Young 1954, 60). MS Hunter 303 is prolific in its use, catchwords being written on every verso (Fig. 2), whether complete or split-words[9] as in the example of page 32, revealing the strict methodology followed by the professional hand of the scribe.

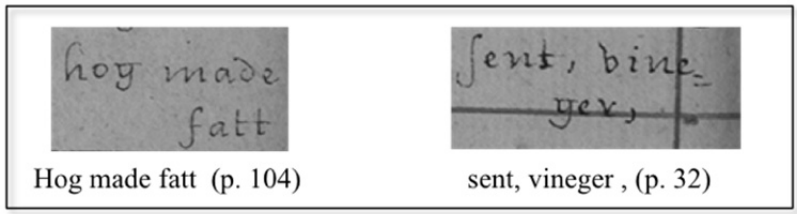

Figure 2. Catchwords in MS Hunter 303.

1.2.4. Binding and Collation

The witness retains its original binding made of undecorated limp vellum with laced-in thongs,[10] being partially deteriorated and loose on the spine. The vellum is reinforced with a paper pastedown so as to give some rigidity to the cover. Additional protection was provided by yapp edges, by folding the vellum 90º degrees at the fore-edge of the bookblock. The spine is labelled with the word "women", while the word "manuscript" as well as other illegible words are written on the front cover.[11]

This type of binding was particularly used in small volumes for personal reading, frequently found in prayer books and textbooks as it was cheaper than more sophisticated and decorated covers (Barrios 2006, 24). Limp vellum bindings were very extensive in England in the 16th and the early 17th century, though its used diminished greatly after the middle of the 17th century, except for stationary binding (Pearson 2004, 20, 151).

The volume does not show endbands and raised bands in the spine, retaining only the marks of the sewing supports. The book has four sewing supports made of twisted thong evenly spaced along the spine, plus a kettle stitch near the head and the tail. Closing cloth ties are also missing, though the holes in the front and back cover indicate their original position.

Some aspects of the binding, such as the use of white paper for the endleaves (and one of better or at least different quality from the writing paper) could indicate that the book was (re)bound several years after being written.

As far as collation is concerned, the formula describing the witness's collation is reproduced as stated by Young and Aitken (1908, 243):

> "Three paper fly-leaves ($i^{2(4)}$)), originally four, i, 1· and 2· attached, i, 3· almost all torn off, i, 4· gone. Two paper fly-leaves (ii^{2}) || $1^{7(8)}$, 2^{12}, 3^{8}-58^{8}, $59^{8(10)}$ || Four paper fly-leaves (iii^{4}), iv, 3· and 4· attached. 1, 8. and 59, 9· and 10· lost 1, 3 vº. is blank".

This indicates that the initial flyleaves are made of two *bifolia*, being the first and the second leaves attached on the inside of the vellum cover; i.e. pastedown; the third is almost completely torn off while the four is lost. Flyleaf i.3, shows three initials in the upper part, 'g m H', which could refer to its ownership or the binder (Figure 3.a). In the following paper flyleaf ii^2, there is an inscription made by an 18th-century hand that reads Mr. Wm H (the rest is torn off), perhaps referring to its possessor the Scottish gynaecologist William Hunter (Figure 3.c).

As commented in the previous section, the structure of the book is mostly performed in *quartos*, e.g. quires 1, and 3 to 58, being quires 2 and 59, with twelve and ten leaves respectively, being the exception. The final flyleaves, iii^4, have leaves 3 and 4 attached to the back-vellum cover, with the word "love" in iii^3, probably just a pen trial (Figure 3.b).

Figure 3. Inscriptions in MS Hunter 303.

1.2.5. Ruling and Margins

An important aspect of the design of manuscript books was the layout or *mise-en-page*, which involved among other things the ruling pattern, i.e.

single or double column, as well as the margin of the page, both conceived with a dual purpose: functional and aesthetic. The former is concerned with the placement of the written text and the decorations in the page, while the latter is related to stylistic aspects such as symmetry (Peikola 2013, 14-17).

MS Hunter 303 is written in a single column of about 28-30 lines per page, framed by asymmetric (outer and inner) four side margins drawn in red ink. The layout of a typical page is described in Figure 4. The dimension of the writing area suggests that the single-column pattern was the most appropriate for this book as it facilitates the reading as well as being less demanding for the scribe. It must be also noted that the size of the handwriting was in fact quite small. No signs of full ruling[12] are appreciated even though the lines are straight and equally separated from each other, indicating a very skilled scribe.

Outer vertical margins are doubled, i.e. the margin is framed between two vertical lines, and they are used for marginalia and insertions, while pagination and headlines are placed in the upper margin. The text is carefully contained within the margin frame. Furthermore, signs of pricking are clearly appreciated in the intersection of margins.[13]

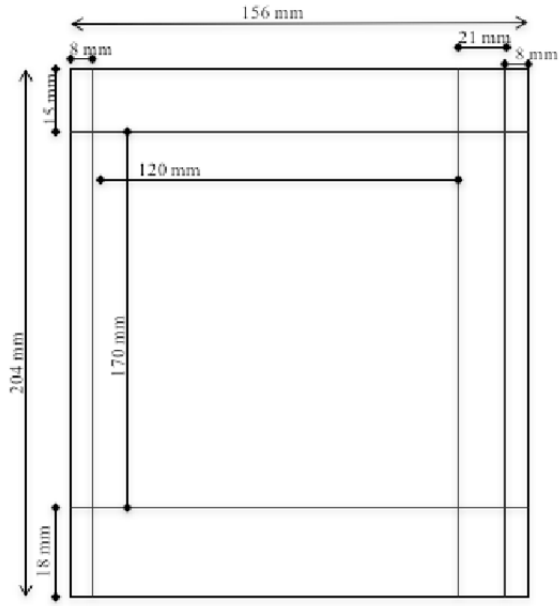

Figure 4. MS Hunter 303-page dimension and writing area

According to Petti, full ruling, common in Middle English texts, became less fashionable in the late 15th century, being eventually omitted in 16th-century manuscripts (1977, 6). The coexistence of manuscripts and printed books during the early Modern period gave rise to the interchange of editorial characteristics between both type of materials (2006, 6), which could have been the case of MS Hunter 303. In addition, the single-column layout, typical of Carolingian codices, became fashionable during the Humanist movement (Derolez 2003, 35), and therefore systematically followed in the writing of the witness.

1.2.6. Pagination and Headlines

Pagination employing Arabic numbers became frequent from the late Renaissance period, and it served to identify the order in which the sheets should be bound later (Hunter 2006, 33). Thus, the scribe of MS Hunter 303 uses Arabic numerals for pagination,[14] being systematically positioned in the upper external corner, just above the superior margin line, on every page. In addition, a shortened version of the title of the witness, *Of the diseases of women*, is reproduced above the margin in every folio recto, while the reference to the book number appears on the verso (Figure 5).

The pagination is reproduced from Young and Aitken (1954, 243):

> "Pagination (from 2, 1 rº. to 59, 8 vº.), pp. 1-958 (36, 2 rº.=p. 575; 36, 2 vº.=p. 578)"

It should be noted that the title page, the preface and the table of contents are not paginated, occupying from f. 1rº to f. 8vº. Apart from the misnumbering described by Young and Aitken in f. 36, which coincides with the transition between the first and the second book, there is another error in f. 26 2 rº.=p. 455; 26, 2 vº.=p. 556. In this case, the scribe has inadvertently omitted the inclusion of one hundred numbers between the recto and the verso of f. 26. Therefore, the correct total number of pages of the volume should be p. 1-855.

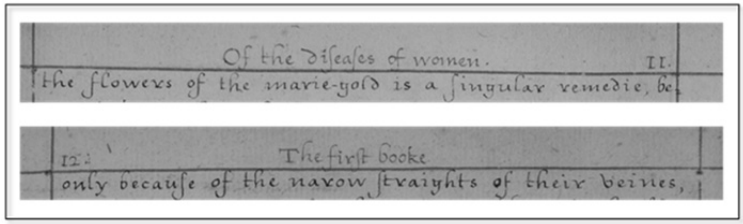

Figure 5. MS Hunter 303 example of pagination.

1.2.7. Watermarks

Watermarks are small pictures, letters or a combination of both, which can be appreciated when the paper is held up to the light. They were "drawn" in fine wire sewn on the surface of the paper mould. They first appeared in the 13th century as an identification of the paper-makers (Gaskell 1972, 61). During the 16th and 17th centuries, watermarks gradually lost their original trade significance, becoming common indicators of paper quality or size (Gaskell 1972, 62). Thus, watermarks can help to identify the provenance of the paper, and to some extent its probable date. However, the variability, sometimes very subtle, of watermarks makes its identification a complex and difficult task. All in all, two general principles can be applied: firstly, the more complex and bigger watermark, the more modern it is in time;[15] and secondly, the analysis of different watermarks appearing in the same book could serve to situate the manuscript within a likely range of decades (Hunter 1930, 294; Stevenson 1962, 198).

The analysis of the writing surface with a back-light sheet reveals the presence of several watermarks hitherto unknown, namely a *pot* and an *eagle* in the first and last flyleaves, respectively, and two varieties of *columns* or *posts* in the writing paper (Figure 6). The occurrence of various watermarks in the volume is explained by the use of different paper qualities and also a likely different chronology. Conversely, all the folios present two varieties of a column-type watermark, which could probably point to a common origin, though from two different stocks.

The *pot* figure (Fig. 6.a) is the commonest mark in England during the 17th century, dropping out of use after 1675 (Heawood 1930, 291). They typically appear in small high-quality paper between c. 1620 and c. 1655 manufactured by Norman paper mills (Ashbee, Thompson, and Wainwright 2014). The size and decoration of the *pot* figure in MS Hunter 303 coincide with similar figures dated in the second half of the 17th century.[16]

The *crown-eagle* found in the back flyleaf (Fig. 6.b) was used commonly by Basle mills in the late 16th and early 17th centuries (Churchill 1935). The *two-columns* figure, in turn, of which two varieties have been identified, is witnessed in all the quires that compose the book (Fig. 6.c). According to Heawood, this form appeared c.1620 and became common during the next decade, being probably of French (Norman) origin (1930, 287). This is certainly the less elaborate of the watermarks found in MS Hunter 303. Similar *two-column* watermarks have been dated in the first half of the 17th century, which could serve to determine a likely date for the composition of the witness.

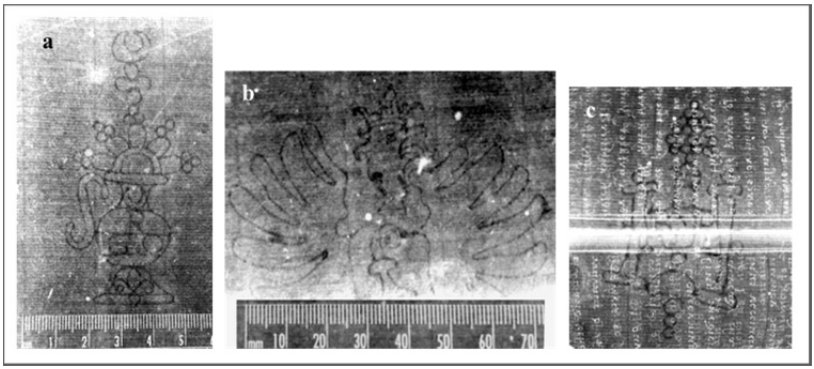

Figure 6. Watermarks identified in MS Hunter 303.

Watermarks in MS Hunter 303 indicate that it was mostly written on paper produced in France, which was, in fact, the usual provenance of the paper used in England during the 17th century.

1.3. Palaeography

The study of *palaeography,* from Greek *palæo* meaning ancient and *graphia* denoting writing, focuses on the handwriting features of ancient texts and their inscriptions, particularly aimed at dating the texts (Troncarelli 2001). In this palaeographic analysis, we must also examine other revealing scribal features, such as punctuation, marginalia, abbreviations and corrections as proposed by Denholm-Young (1954, 1). The aim of this section is to describe the letterforms as well as other palaeographic features employed in MS Hunter 303, in order to provide an approximate date of composition.

1.3.1. The Script

MS Hunter 303 is pristinely written in a neat and homogeneous hybrid script, combining mainly *italic* features with some influence of the *secretary* hand. The *italic* hand arrives in England in the 16th century,[17] taken from 15th–century Italian humanists among whom this script was perceived as "an elegant and lucid handwriting" (Blunt 1952, 9).[18] This round and perfect script entrusted the values of a "civilized world", being established as the script for the monarchy and the upper classes, spreading also among professional scriveners and well-educated people (Tannenbaum 1930, 14–15).

The imported *italic* script adopted features of the native *secretary* hand to yield a bastard or hybrid type that extended far into the 17th century (Denholm-Young 1954, 75).[19] Thus, the English Renaissance witnessed the co-occurrence of a variety of scripts, from different *secretary* types, e.g. *Elizabethan secretary, bastard secretary, engrossing secretary*, among others, together with an ordinary hand developed from earlier *gothic* scripts, and other institutional (or chancery) hands. In this complex panorama, the *italic* eventually superseded the native types.

In the case of MS Hunter 303, the uprightness of the script matches with the 16th-century *italic*, before it turned narrower and sloped, as happened with the English derived forms. It also resembles in a high degree the *François* version taught in France by *mâitres d'écriture* as Allais de Beaulieu.[20] In addition, the homogeneity of the hand employed in MS Hunter 303 can solely be achieved by using a good quality pen, a consistent pen-holding and position, making letters proportionate to each other, maintaining consistently size and slope, keeping the letters and words equally spaced, and providing a good alignment, which signals unequivocally a professional scrivener (Fairbank 1957, 23)

1.3.1.1. The Minuscules

The inventory of minuscules, composed by 26 characters, shows the hybrid hand employed in MS Hunter 303 (Figure 7). Thus, the *italic* component of the script is particularly noticeable in its uprightness and roundness, together with the lack of ligatures (Fairbank and Wolpe 1960, 20), which enormously facilitates the reading despite the small size of the characters.

The *secretary* script, in turn, can be recognised in the single-lobed <a> plus a short-curved stroke (Fig. 7, 1); in the letter <g> formed by the typical head closed by a horizontal stroke, and a tail ending in a hook (Fig. 7, 7); and in the right-shouldered <r> (Fig. 7, 17). In addition, the scribe uses two forms of <s>, the long form in the initial and the medial position, and a short form in final position (Fig.7, 18-19). Most of the characters are rendered in supralinear position, with the exception of <f>, <g>, <p>, <q>, long <s>, <y> and <z>. The symbols <u> and <v> are interchangeable, and they are considered as variations of the same character (Tannenbaum 1930, 76). The <u> occurs in the medial position used as a vowel and as a consonant, e.g. *spirituall, obseruations*, while the letter <v> appears in the initial position more frequently as a consonant, although it is also used as a vowel, e.g. *violets, vsing.* Finally, the character representing <z> was not so common in English as scribes found it difficult to write quickly a legible <z>, being frequently substituted by an <s>. From the 13th century

onwards, penmen began to extend the second stroke below the line shaping the present form of the letter. The <z> found in this manuscript follows this idea, being formed by two short strokes and an infralinear open foot (Fig.7, 26).

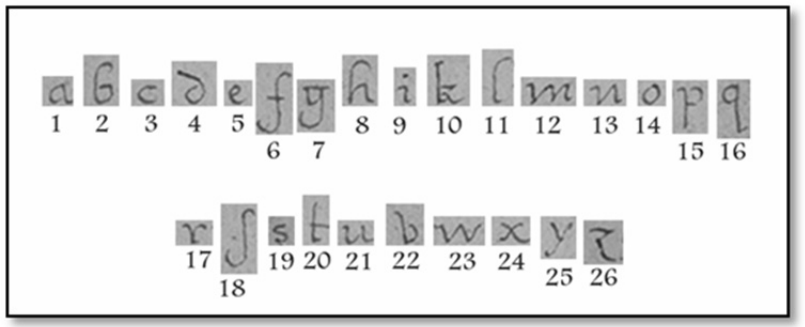

Figure 7. Inventory of minuscules.

The homogeneity of the handwriting makes us consider the possibility that the script was really an imitation of the French source version, presumably a book printed in 1582 with a *roman italic* typography.

1.3.1.2. The Majuscules

The inventory of majuscules, in turn, includes 22 characters, as there is no representation of the letters <J>, <U>, <W>, and <Z> in the MS (Figure 8). The analysis of the majuscules shows a square and upright typography, consisting of undecorated letters made with straight or slightly curved strokes. This sobriety of majuscules resembles very much the shape of *roman capitals* carved in columns. These features match Petti's description provided of the *cancellaresca* and particularly of the *hybrid cancellaresca*. These scripts were commonly found in 16th-century copybooks, and it is described as "bold, clear, almost upright, with unlinked letters and often with the consistent use of short <s>" (1977, 18–19).

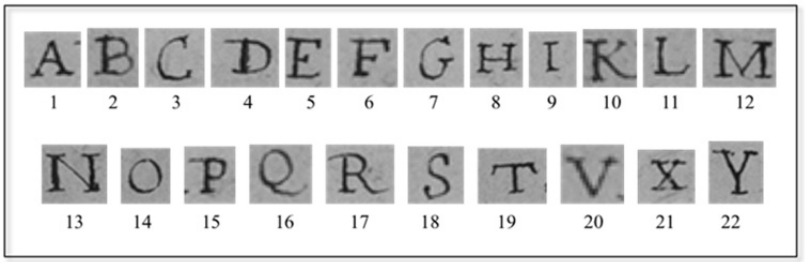

Figure 8. Inventory of majuscules.

In the light of this analysis, MS Hunter 303 was probably written during the first half of the 17th century, taking into consideration that the *italic* is the predominant form, particularly in the majuscules. However, it is also true that as a professional scribe, the writer of MS Hunter 303 would have been able to reproduce different types of calligraphies, even to copy one from a printed book as it was proposed before.[21]

1.3.2. Numerals

The numerals correspond to the Arabic form, which gradually replaces the Roman numbers from the 16th century onwards (Petti 1977, 28). The zero has the form of a rounded <o>, the number one is a simple stroke with head and foot serif, the number four is a closed triangle with an infralinear stem, and the number seven a simple horizontal stroke with an oblique left-handed infralinear stem (Figure 9). In general, the numbers 0, 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8 are situated on the line, while the numbers 3, 4, 7 and 9 are infralinear. Numerals are employed in the MS for pagination purposes mainly, and in the table of contents, while references to quantities in the recipes are generally in the written form.

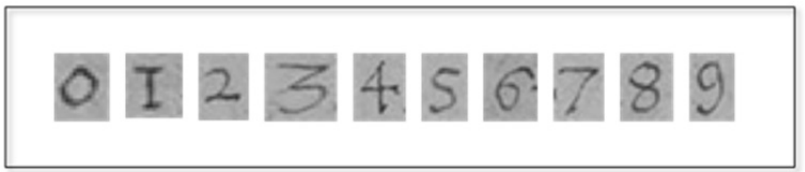

Figure 9. Inventory of numerals.