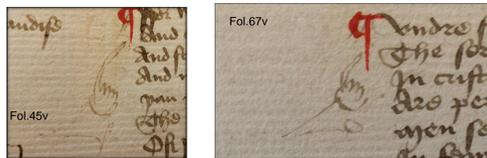


Marginalia and Annotation in Victoria, McPherson Library, MS.Eng.1

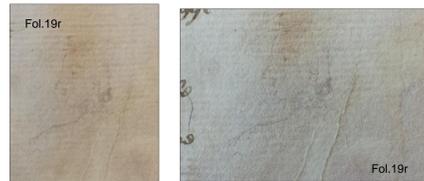
Types of Marginalia

Manicules



Little hands pointing out areas of subjective interest.

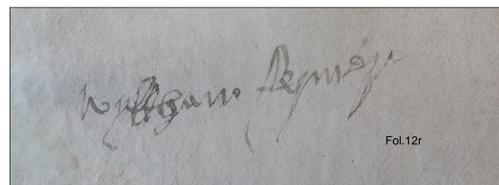
Doodles



Pen Trials and Letter Practice



Owner Signature?



Possible owner signature, "Wyllham Fermer"; the Fermer family appears in the Paston letters.

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All images, photographed by Alanna Blackall, are from Victoria, McPherson Library, MS.Eng.1 and are courtesy of the University of Victoria Special Collections.

Overview

Victoria, McPherson Library, MS Eng.1, a late fifteenth-century copy of John Lydgate's *The Fall of Princes*, is one of few complete medieval manuscripts housed at UVic; it is our only Middle English manuscript. In 1978, Anthony Edwards assessed it in the journal *Manuscripta* and claimed, "the Victoria [Lydgate] manuscript is unlikely to be a text of great significance to students." This project openly challenges Edward's appraisal through study of the manuscript and its poem, with special focus on its marginalia. **The Victoria Lydgate is a valuable resource, and its marginalia in particular opens multiple avenues of research on medieval and early modern readership and book ownership.** Although the main text is Middle English, the marginalia is trilingual—Middle English, Latin, and French—and it consists of structural markings (e.g., section labels or titles not introduced by the original scribe), scribal notations and corrections, an early modern signature ("Wyllham Fermer"), and commentary on the text.

Women and Readership

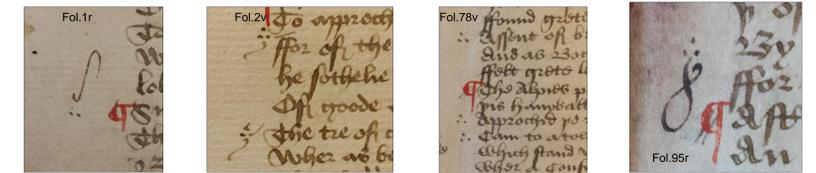
Victoria, McPherson Library, MS.Eng.1 houses a variety of marginalia and annotation, but it is, perhaps, most interesting to note notation that is specific to women. There are a multitude of notes of envoi throughout the whole of the manuscript, but there is one instance where the envoi indicates that it is a "L'envoi p[our] les femmes" (fol.7v). This is not the only occurrence in which a marginal note in *The Fall of Princes* has been specifically directed towards or about women. The Longleat MS (a comparable MS housed in Somerset, UK) also contains a "nota for wemen" (fol.159.15r) directly opposite a passage that discusses the Lombard princess Romilda, who is rejected by Cacus after spending the night with him and late dies impaled on a stake. Another item of interest regarding women and readership can be found in the bracketing and braces that annotate our manuscript throughout. The annotator has explicitly singled out passages which address women or their character. This is, potentially, indicative of either a female reader or a special interest in female characters in the context of *The Fall of Princes*.

Findings

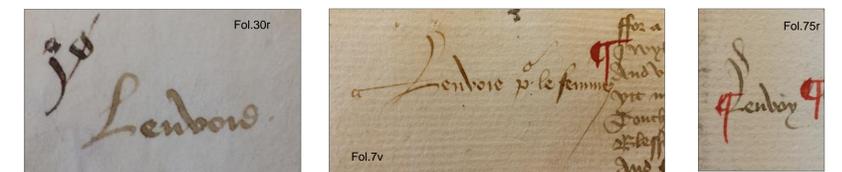
Victoria, McPherson Library, MS.Eng.1 is not the most attractive manuscript in the world, but what it lacks in style it makes up for in content. The differing hands and scripts in the annotations and marginalia denote multiple users of the manuscript over time, all of whom appear to engage with the manuscript in different ways. The level of engagement with McPherson MS.Eng.1 varies depending on the user of the text. The interaction between the main scribe and the text depicts a user mired, on multiple levels, in the content of the manuscript and likely more than one exemplar. This scribe adds some notes of envoi, brackets and braces, corrections, and annotations of content, frequently noted misplaced lines with dots and shanks. Other, later, users are demarcated by the changes in the style of the marginal script, as evidenced by letter practice and a possible owner signature. It is also interesting to note that certain figures, often historical or mythological, are tracked throughout with the use of brackets. Another point of interest is rhyming braces, which periodically, but only intermittently, keep track of rhyme scheme. Contrary to Edward's previous claim, Victoria, McPherson Library, MS.Eng.1 is a manuscript that is rife with possibilities for future inquiry about medieval and early modern readership and book ownership.

Types of Annotation

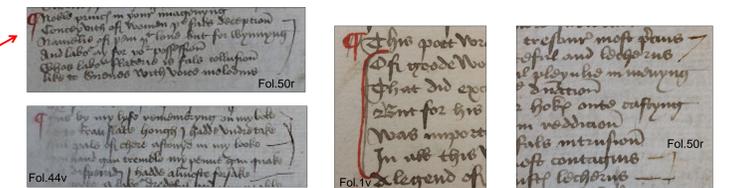
Dots and Shanks



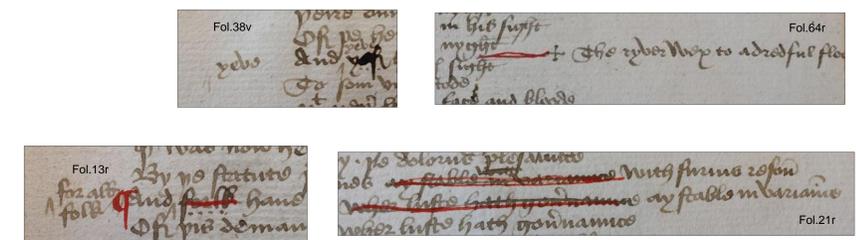
Later Notes of Envoi



Bracketing and Braces



Corrections



Annotation of Content

