

Pseudo-Hippocratic Zodiacal Lunaries in the Hunterian Collection: A Comparative Study of the Manuscript Context of Glasgow University Library Hunter MS 461 and Hunter MS 513

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(Received 1 August 2024; revised 18 November 2024)

Manuscript catalogues are rarely comprehensive. Thus, brief texts and/or treatises incorporated by later hands may have gone unnoticed. This is the case of two medieval manuscripts housed at Glasgow University Library—Hunter MS 461 and Hunter MS 513—which contain the same medical astrological tract, known as *Astrologia Ypocratis* in Latin or *Be boke of ypocras* in English. Hunter MS 461 is an astrological and mathematical compendium written mainly in Latin in the thirteenth century and Hunter MS 513 is a medical miscellany in English dating from the fifteenth century. Close and direct reexamination of the contents gathered in both medieval manuscripts will uncover treatises, notes and later insertions which have passed unperceived by the eyes of scholarship so far. This study will provide a more detailed map of the context in which the medical astrological tract under consideration was copied during the Middle Ages and will also offer some new insights regarding the evolution of the status this tract enjoyed from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries.

Keywords: manuscript context; Hunter MS 513; Hunter MS 461; *Astrologia Ypocratis*; *Be boke of ypocras*

1. Introduction

The University of Glasgow houses the Hunterian Collection,¹ donated for the use of the public and students' improvement by William Hunter,² an illustrious anatomist, royal physician and medical teacher, at the end of the eighteenth century. This collection comprises:

¹ For the Hunterian Collection, see Graham (2009).

² For William Hunter, see Foart Simmons (1983).

books, printed and manuscript, prints and books of prints, engraved copper plates, drawings, picture, medals, coins, anatomical preparations of every kind, fossils and ores, shells and corals and other marine productions, birds, insects and other preserved animals and parts of animals and plants, curiosities from the South Seas and what ever could be naturally reckoned a part of his collection of curiosities. (Brock 1990, iii)

His diverse collection of medieval manuscripts was catalogued by John Young and Henderson Aitken a published in 1908. Their work has been carefully continued by the University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections, whose effort to digitize the information gathered in the catalogue is greatly appreciated. This University Service has also updated and shared virtual publications and references, as well as further information provided by researchers who worked with Hunterian medieval manuscripts.

However meticulous their cataloguing can be, sometimes brief tracts gathered in manuscript miscellanies have gone unnoticed. The first aim of this brief note on two Hunterian manuscripts—a Latin miscellany (Hunter MS 461) and a Middle English medical compendium (Hunter MS 513)—is to reexamine the contents of two medieval manuscripts, which will reveal that the existing information regarding their contents is still imprecise. Latin and Middle English tracts coexist, to a greater or lesser degree, in both volumes. These two manuscripts also contain a brief medieval treatise on astrological medicine, a zodiacal lunary attributed to Hippocrates,³ in Latin and Middle English respectively. It describes the outcomes the moon causes in each of the twelve signs of the Zodiac upon parts of the body leading to different types of diseases. This prognostic subgenre is defined as zodiacal lunaries which gives “their prognostications according to the moon’s passage in the zodiac” (Taavitsainen 1988, 46).

The online entry for Hunter MS 513 entitles this zodiacal lunary as “Pseudo-Hippocrates’ Treatise on Zodiacal Influence” and Hunter MS 461 gives it the title “Pseudo-Hippocrates’ Treatise on the Virtue of the Moon.” They are better known *Pe boke of ypocras* in English (Diego-Rodríguez 2023) and *Astrologia Ypocratis* in Latin (Thorndike 1960; Kibre 1945, 1977, 1978). The line of transmission and the vernacularization of this zodiacal lunary has recently received scholarly attention (De la Cruz Cabanillas and Diego-Rodríguez 2018; Diego-Rodríguez 2021, 2023). However, little is known about the manuscript context in which this zodiacal lunary appears. The reexamination of the contents of both scientific compendiums allows a precise comparison of the contexts in which *Astrologia*

³ I have examined Hunter MS 426, which contains a treatise entitled in Young and Aitken’s (1908) catalogue INCERTI AVCTORIS, “DE SIGNIS ZODIACIS” (ff. 69r–74). This tract is not a witness of the zodiacal lunary under study.

Ypocratis and *Pe boke of ypocras* are gathered in a thirteenth-century Latin miscellany and in a fifteenth-century medical volume respectively. Therefore, only a few paleographical references and some notes on specific features and description of the manuscripts under consideration are provided to contextualize both compendiums. This collation will put the zodiacal lunary under study into its wider contexts and offer new insights regarding the position this zodiacal lunary held in England throughout the Middle Ages.

2. Glasgow University Library Hunter MS 461

This is a 183-folio miscellaneous manuscript written in brown crayon and ink in various hands dating for the most part from the thirteenth century. It is mainly written in Latin, but it contains some notes on astrology in Middle English on f. 182v in an early fifteenth-century hand, as well as an inscription in a sixteenth or seventeenth-century hand at the very end of the volume which combines Latin and English words inside three squares (*makus, meuus | moreus | Doo make me | no more ade*). It contains treatises which cover varied aspects of medieval science: astrology, music, medicine, computation and arithmetic. Four folios have been added at the beginning and at the end of the volume. They contain *The Register of Royal Briefs* written in a late thirteenth-century notarial hand in Latin which, as Young and Aitken pointed out, “very possibly represents the correspondence of Edward I (1272–1307)” (1908, 384). Appendix 1 below details the contents of the manuscript, which were reexamined thoroughly as part of the project reported here.

Red and blue initials in the manuscript indicate the beginning of most of the treatises, and of the different sections these works contain. Astrological and geometrical diagrams in red and black inks illustrate three treatises (*Book of Thebith on the Motion or Access and Recess of the Eighth Sphere*, *Treatise, illustrated, of the Incession of Angues* and *Theory of the planets*) and musical diagrams in black ink are used in *Johannes de Muris’ Treatise on Musical intervals*. The following folios are blank: 3r, 20r, 37v, 49r, 126v, 127r and 171v. However, some of them were originally left blank and have later received ornaments: f. 37v shows a red crayon leaf perhaps from a birch tree or hazel tree; a small red crayon figure sitting down next to the leaf; three red crayon consecutive drawings of a seated child, a crouching child and a child walking; two brown crayon faces; a black ink face of a serious man; f. 49r contains in the middle of the folio a red crayon picture of a bearded man and f. 171v is now occupied with a full-page, red crayon picture, which Dr Young conjectures a portrait of Emperor Charles (Young and Aitken 1908, 384). Red crayon pictures are very frequent in the volume occupying also the space left blank in some folios: an urn (f. 26r), a

bearded man (f. 26v) or a man holding onto the top of a tree while an elephant is approaching (f. 37r).⁴

The zodiacal lunary under consideration appears at the beginning of the miscellany. This “Pseudo-Hippocrates’ Treatise on the Virtue of the Moon” or *Astrologia Ypocratis* starts in the seventh line of f. 8v with a blue initial and finishes on f. 10v. According to Kibre (1978, 136), *Astrologia Ypocratis*, allegedly a translation of a Greek treatise by Hippocrates, had a wide circulation from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. This tract specifically corresponds to William of Moerbeke’s Latin translation of the text based on the studied carried out by De la Cruz Cabanillas and Diego-Rodríguez (2018).⁵

3. Glasgow University Library Hunter MS 513

This is a 117-folio *collectanea medica* written in brown crayon and ink dating from the fifteenth century. It is mainly written in Middle English, but it contains one astrological table in f. 111v written in Latin. Also, ff. 1r-2v consist of “the lower half of a folio from an illuminated XIII. Cent. MS. of Old Testament history ‘cxxxiii’ containing the reign of Jotham (2 Chron. xxvii)” and they are also in Latin (Young and Aitken 1908, 422).

The volume contains different early modern hands, including in f. 2v William Hunter’s hand under a late seventeenth-century medical recipe. He included a list of the main contents of the manuscript: *This old Ms contains | 1. of the disorders of the Eyes | 2. The booke of the Antidotaries | 3. A pretended book of Ypocras*. This medical miscellany also cloaks the two more curiosities:

- The price of the manuscript is penciled at the top right of the folio: I = I = 6 (f. 1r). The year 1882 is also penciled in this folio.
- The volume shows different signatures. The first one was written with black ink in a late seventeenth-century hand in folio 2r *George Blaggrave his | Booke*. There is another seventeenth-century autograph at the top of folio 27r written in brown crayon *Francis Sleighe*. Folio 39v at the very top of the folio reads *Jhom garnett is my name* in a late sixteenth-century hand. The last signature appears in folio 101v written in red crayon in an early eighteenth-century hand: *Charles Chancy*.

Hunter MS 513 contains four main treatises. The first medical treatise is Benvenutus Grassus’s *Treatise on Diseases of the Eye* (English translation of *De Probatissima Arte Oculorum*) edited by Eldredge (1996). The second main

⁴ For further information about these illustrations, see Diego-Rodríguez (2024).

⁵ Guillaume de Moerbeke (1215–86) was a Flemish cleric, archbishop, and classical scholar who translated the writings of early Greek philosophers and commentators and played an important role in the transmission of Greek knowledge to the medieval Latin West. For further information see Beullens (2023).

medical tract is the *Antidotary*, edited by Marqués Aguado (2012). Two pseudo-astrological writings follow and have recently received scholarly attention. First, the *Pseudo-Hippocrates' Treatise on Zodiacal Influence*, identified as *Pe boke of ypocras* (Diego-Rodríguez 2023) and edited and studied in detail by Diego-Rodríguez (2017, 2018, 2021, 2023). Secondly, the *Pseudo-Hippocrates' Treatise on the Signs of Death* identified as the *Capsula eburnea* by De la Cruz Cabanillas and Diego-Rodríguez (2021). Prescriptions have been inserted in late sixteenth/early seventeenth-century hands in different folios, as well as astrological tables and considerations. The following folios are blank: 1r, 1v, 111r, 112v, 113r, 114r, 117v. Appendix 2 details the contents of the manuscript, which were reviewed thoroughly thanks to the direct examination of the miscellany.

The zodiacal lunary under consideration appears at the end of the miscellany. This *Pseudo-Hippocrates' Treatise on Zodiacal Influence* known as *Pe boke of ypocras* starts in the seventh line of f. 101r with a blue-color initial and finishes in f. 107r. Most zodiacal signs display blank spaces left beneath the text with the intention of adding some illustrations. This tract circulated extensively during the late Middle Ages and has been identified in thirteen Middle English witnesses (Diego-Rodríguez 2023). It is the vernacular translation of the Latin tract entitled *Astrologia Ypocratis* (Kibre 1977, 1978; De la Cruz Cabanillas and Diego-Rodríguez 2018).

4. Findings

The reexamination of the contents reveals that Hunter MS 461, catalogued as a Latin thirteenth-century manuscript, also contains astrological notes and tables in English introduced by a later hand, as well as a few words written in English at the very end of the volume. Hunter MS 513, catalogued as a fifteenth-century miscellany in English, also contains a later Latin hand, although most of its later hands have included prescriptions in an early modern English secretary hand which have been identified thanks to this close revision and direct examination of the manuscript.

The identification and collation of the accompanying texts in both manuscripts also reveal that *Astrologia Ypocratis* coexists with astrological and mathematical treatises exclusively (the musical tracts focused on a mathematical perspective towards musical intervals). No texts related to medicine are gathered within this manuscript. Therefore, Hunter MS 461 entirely gathers Latin academic writings. In the thirteenth century astrological medical knowledge attributed to the father of medicine was perceived as an academic speciality, and in this case, it was copied in this volume among its first folios, between an introductory text about astrology and another on the conception of the spheres. *Pe boke of ypocras* appears incorporated into a medical compendium written mainly in Middle

English, after important and lengthy medical writings: two academic specialized medical treatises (*the disorders of the eyes* and *pe booke of pe antitodarie*). Hunter MS 513 does not contain any other treatise devoted to astrology or astrological medicine. Later hands have included astrological tables and medieval recipes. The perspective towards this zodiacal lunary evolved and changed from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, from a learned academic tract in Latin to a more popular vernacular adaptation associated exclusively to the medical field.

This note proves that *Astrologia Ypocratis* and *Pe booke of ypocras* do not survive as a stand-alone text. They appear incorporated into miscellaneous codices which gather other treatises and therefore, this zodiacal lunary tended to pass unperceived at the eyes of scholarship. The study and subsequent understanding of the cultural dynamics of the manuscript miscellanies gathering this medical astrological writing allow us to reconstruct with greater certainty and accuracy the contexts within which it was copied, transmitted and used (Smith 2021, 361), as well as the social and cultural perception this tract had during the Middle Ages in England. The reexamination of more manuscript witnesses of *Astrologia Ypocratis* and *Pe booke of ypocras* will undoubtedly draw a more complete cultural map of the contexts within which this zodiacal lunary was copied—a project which I am currently undertaking. Descriptive studies such as the one undertaken here are a necessary precursor.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Archives and Special Collection. They awarded me a University of Glasgow Library Visiting Research Fellowship, which made feasible the underpinning library/manuscript work for this note.

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Appendix 1. Contents of Glasgow, Glasgow University Library, Hunter MS 641.

Items	Location	Date	Language
Geometrical (astrological) diagram and notes <i>Incipit:</i> Prophetia Johannis de Rupescissa	ff. 1r–2r	15th–16th c.	Latin
Astrological tables and notes. <i>Incipit:</i> Eleuacio solis in qualibet hora cum indicibus. <i>Explicit:</i> sextupla	ff. 1v–2v	15th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Introduction to Astrology (Albumasar Abalachi). <i>Incipit:</i> Sapientes Indi de plurimis indicat secundum lunam considerantes ipsius mansiones et coniunctiones uel aspectus. <i>Explicit:</i> ventos et ipse sedet in arena et clamat timore latronum et ignis. <i>Explicit:</i> liber albumazar	ff. 3v–8v	13th c.	Latin
Pseudo-Hippocrates' Treatise on the Virtue of the Moon. <i>Incipit:</i> Sapientissimus ypocrates et omnium medicorum peritissimus. <i>Explicit:</i> Expletus est libellus ypocritis de virtute lune quam habet super mutationem egritudinum in vnoquoque signo et hoc per aspectum omnium planetarum et aliam stellarum fixarum ad ipsam	ff. 8v–10v	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Book of Thebith on the Conception of the Sphere and of its diverse Circles. <i>Incipit:</i> occidentalem minimando descendentes et ymaginacionem omnino teneatur ad similitudinem. <i>Explicit:</i> Thebit de Imaginacione spere et circulorum eius diuersorum	ff. 11r–11v	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Book of Thebith on the Quantities of the Stars and Planets. <i>Incipit:</i> liber thebit de quantitibus stellarum et planetarum et primo terre. <i>Explicit:</i> liber thebit de quantitibus stellarum	ff. 11v–13r	13th c.	Latin

Unknown Author's Book of Thebith on the Motion or Access and Recess of the Eighth Sphere. <i>Incipit:</i> Thebith De motu siue accessu et recess octaue speere. <i>Explicit:</i> Thebith de motu 8 spere	ff. 13v–16r	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's (?Book of Thebith), Table of Ascession and Recession of the Mean Motion of Aries and Libra in the Arabic Chronology. <i>Incipit:</i> Tabula accessionis et recessionis. <i>Explicit:</i> 180 180 o o o	f. 16v	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's (?Book of Thebith), Treatise, illustrated, of the Incession of Angues. <i>Incipit:</i> Canon incessionis Anguim. <i>Explicit:</i> et similiter operandum	ff. 17r–19v	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's (?Book of Thebith), Theory of the planets. <i>Incipit:</i> theorica planetarum cuius prima theorica es de sole. <i>Explicit:</i> Deo gracias	ff. 20v–31r	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Book of Thebith of Things needing Explanation before Almagest is read. <i>Incipit:</i> Thebit de hijs que indigent expositione antequam legatur almagesti. <i>Explicit:</i> Thebit	ff. 31v–34v	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Treatise on Boethius' Music. <i>Incipit:</i> brevis tractatus super Musicam boecij. <i>Explicit:</i> hec de musica sufficient	ff. 34v–37r	13th c.	Latin
Johannes de Muris' Treatise on Musical intervals. <i>Incipit:</i> Proportionum musicalium per venerande memorie magistrum Johannem de Muris scientie musicalis.	ff. 38r–65v	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Treatise on Planetary Influence. <i>Incipit:</i> Septimus mensis et prius ad influentie. <i>Explicit:</i> passione liberauit Hec autem	ff. 66r–71v	13th c.	Latin
'Ali Ibn 'Abbas, On the Selection of Hours. <i>Incipit:</i> Rogasti a me rune vt tibi librum de horis. <i>Explicit:</i> haly de electionibus horarum. Deo gracias	ff. 72r–101v	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Treatise on unexamined urine. <i>Incipit:</i> tractatus de Vrina non Visa. <i>Explicit:</i> tractatus de Vrina non Visa.	ff. 102r–107v	13th c.	Latin

Henricus de Malini's Treatise on the Luminaries. <i>Incipit:</i> quarte crisis Et radix crisis in ariete quidem quando luna fuerit. <i>Explicit:</i> 1292 scriptus per Johannem de moorbeke anno 1412 26 die augusti quare beatus omnium creaturarum creator laudetur	ff. 108r–114r	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Treatise on Medical Memoranda. <i>Incipit:</i> Notabilia vtilia medicis. <i>Explicit:</i> a iuncturis	ff. 114v–117v	13th c.	Latin
Hermes' Treatise on Accidents. <i>Incipit:</i> Verba hermetis qui dixit in suo libro de accidentibus. <i>Explicit:</i> proficies si deus voluerit	ff. 118r–119v	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Treatise on Arithmetical Integers. <i>Incipit:</i> articulus est decenarius et omnis numerus constans ex denarijs. <i>Explicit:</i> algorismus integrorum	ff. 120r–131r	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Treatise on Arithmetical Progression. <i>Incipit:</i> de Progressione. <i>Explicit:</i> Et prima operacio est nobilis et vtilis.	f. 131v	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Treatise on Arithmetical rules. <i>Incipit:</i> Incipiunt Cautele Algorismi. <i>Explicit:</i> multiplices per 7 tot possidet	ff. 131v–133v	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Annual Tables (1100-1844). <i>Incipit:</i> Anni domini lunaciones littere dominicales termini paschales [these words written vertically head each of the three cols on a page] 1000 13 gf a. <i>Explicit:</i> octo sequuntur xix mediate quod est similiter contra regulam	ff. 134r–142v	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Treatise on Chronology. <i>Incipit:</i> Compotus Compotus diuiditur in sex partes quarum prima do. <i>Explicit:</i> primus compotus	ff. 142v–152v	13th c.	Latin
Unknown Author's Treatise on Chronology. <i>Incipit:</i> secundus compotus Ad inueniendum festa mobilia primo querenda esta littera. <i>Explicit:</i> Luna distat a terra. 149037.	ff. 152v–182v	13th c.	Latin

Notes on Astrology: <i>Incipit:</i> If thou wilt witte in what house of the day what planet regneth. <i>Explicit:</i> and thou hauest thi purpose. if the cloke be truhe in smythyng.	f.182v	Early 15th c. hand	English
Hurried scribbles	f. 183r-183v	13th c.	Latin
Edward I. (?) Register of Royal Letter. <i>Incipit:</i> gressionem illam relinquere nolentis impuritam. <i>Explicit:</i> Rex venerabili in christo patri. S. Waterfordie Episcopo suo Gilbertum Sa	ff. i–iv / ff. i ² –iv ²	Late 13th c.	Latin
Three drawn squares: makus, meuus moreus Doo make me no more ade	ff. v ²	16th-17th c. hand	Latin and English

Appendix 2. Contents of Glasgow, Glasgow University Library, Hunter MS 513.

Items	Location	Date	Language
Old Testament history 'cxxxiii' containing the reign of Jotham (2 Chron. xxvii).	ff. 1r–2v	13th c.	Latin
Signature. George Blagrave his Booke	f. 2r	Late 17th c.	English
Medical recipe <i>ffor and hat cannot make water</i>	f. 2v	Late 17th c.	English
William Hunter's hand	f. 2v	Late 18th c.	English
The disorders of the eyes. Table of contents	ff. 3r–3v	Late 15th c.	English
Of tonicles of the eyzen and the humours & cataractus. <i>Incipit</i> : Oculus anglice an eyze is hard holowe rounde full. <i>Explicit</i> : he wolde vouchesauf to ende your Cures Amen.	ff. 4r–39r	15th c.	English
Signature. Francis Sleighe	f. 27 r	17th c.	English
þe booke of þe antitodarie. <i>Incipit</i> : Here begynneth þe booke of þe antitodarie. <i>Explicit</i> : he regnith withouten ende. Amen	ff. 39v–99v	15th c.	English
Signature. John Garnett is my name	f. 39v	Late 16th c.	English
Medical recipe <i>Aqua potabilo</i>	f. 99v	15th c.	English
Medical recipe: <i>Aqua myrabil</i>	ff. 100r–100v	15th c.	English
<i>Þe boke of Ypocras</i> . <i>Incipit</i> : This is the boke of ypocras in this boke he techith for to. <i>Explicit</i> : þe best þat euer were founde	ff. 101r–107r	15th c.	English

Signature. Charles Chancy	f. 101v	Early 18th c.	English
Medical recipe <i>for a pyn or a wobe</i>	f. 103v	15th c.	English
Medical recipe <i>for the pynne and weebb</i>	f. 104r	15th c.	English
Medical recipe <i>of Agarike</i>	f. 106v	15th c.	English
Medical recipe <i>of cerike</i>	f. 107v	15th c.	English
<i>Capsula eburnea. Incipit:</i> Here begynnethe þe tokenys þat ypocras þe leche. <i>Explicit: Explicit:</i> signa mortis secundum Ypocras	ff. 108r–100v	15th c.	English
Medical recipe <i>take oyle of olyue</i>	f. 110v	15th c.	English
Astrological table	f. 111v	17th c.	Latin
Astrological considerations <i>Take the arse of the moone</i>	f. 112r	17th c.	English
Astrological table	f. 113v	17th c.	English
Medical recipes <i>for the payn in the heede</i>	ff. 114v–116r	17th c.	English
Astrological note <i>that luce my mayde made her covenante wythe me on yer the vij day of november for xvj s and I wholde geve her of my on gentell nes</i>	f. 116v	Early 16th c.	English
<i>pedyr of holworth Estyrologia</i>	f. 117r	Late 16th c.- early 17th c.	English