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Ms 509

Michael Scot, *Liber de signis et imaginibus*

North Italy (probably Venice)

c. 1450-60

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The manuscript is composed of various unrelated texts on astrology, measuring systems and calendar calculations. The texts span a period of at least 100 years and they all appear to have an original provenance in Venice or the Veneto. The text in the Michael Scot segments is written in humanistic cursive in two columns.

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### texts

- ff. 1r-16r      A series of tables, rotae and explanatory texts concerning calendar calculations, epacts, golden numbers, etc. Dates included in these figures run from 1410-1468. The main text is in Latin with explanations in Italian. For additional information, see BLUME/HAFFNER/METZGER 2026, II, no. 26, pp. 311-18 (who note similarities with the tables that appear in Florence, BNC, Magl. XXII, 22, fol. 13r-24v, including the *arbor amoris*, which appears on fol. 10r of the Wellcome ms). They also note that the text on the illustration appears in a longer form in BL, Add MS 41600.
- ff. 16v-28v      Michael Scot, *De signis et imaginibus celi*
- inc:              Incipit tractatus ex libro quem composuit magister Michael scotus subtilissimus, doctor in arte astrologiae de doctrine insinuantis quando unumquodque signum de duodecim signis ... Omnes ymagines coeli numero quadraginta octo —
- expl.:            et hec de signis duodecim colestibus pronunc dicta sufficient.
- ff. 28v-32v      De triginta sex ymaginibus coeli ¶ Et primo de ursa maiori et minori cum revolutione serpentis ymaginati cum demonstratione stellae tramontana.

inc: Greci vertices extremos circa quos spera coeli volvitur pollos nominant. —

expl.: et super cordam disparem In taxtis [!]

**note:** The two Michael Scot texts have been misbound. The most modern pagination appears in the upper right of each recto. A set of numbers at the bottom of each recto is earlier, but demonstrates a similar mispagination. There has been an incomplete attempt to indicate the correct foliation with a series of quire notations at the lower right of the text on some of the recto sides of the folia. It runs from f to f iiii and from g to g iiii.

The most modern pagination is used in the following description. The correct order of the folia should be:

ff. 16v -18r	Aries to Gemini.
ff. 27r - 28v	Cancer to Pisces
ff. 29r -32v	Draco inter arctos to Lyra
ff. 19r - 22r	Cygnus to Ara
ff. 24r - 25v	Centaurus to Vexillum
ff. 23r- 23v	Saturn to Sol-Apollo
ff. 26r-26v	Venus to Luna

### illustrations

The drawings are executed in sepia pen with some colour wash in yellow and pale red. The 48 images of the constellations are marked with circlets and 8-pointed star-symbols. A few of the figures also have geomantic symbols included.



fol. 1r



fol. 1v



fol. 4r



fol. 4v



fol. 10r



fol. 15v



fol. 16v



fol. 18r



fol. 18v



fol. 19r



fol. 19v



fol. 20r



fol. 20v



fol. 21r



fol. 21v



fol. 22r



fol. 22v



fol. 23r



fol. 23v



fol. 24r



fol. 24v



fol. 25r



fol. 25v



fol. 26r



fol. 26v



fol. 27r



fol. 27v



fol. 28r



fol. 28v



fol. 29r



fol. 29v



fol. 30r



fol. 31v



fol. 31r



fol. 31v



fol. 32r



fol. 32v

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- fol. 1r Rota for calculating the days of the month
  - fol. 1v Table for reckoning the phases of the Moon
  - fol. 4r Table listing the hours and minutes of artificial days



- fol. 4v Calculating Golden Numbers and for 'Pascae hebreorum' (Passover) using parts of the fingers
- fol. 10r *Arbor amoris* (after ps-Bonaventura)
- fol. 15v Rota for calculating 'Pasce ludeorum' (Passover), dated 1468 and 1430.
- fol. 16v Title and opening lines of Michael Scot, *De signis et imaginibus celi*
- fol. 18r ARIES (labelled: Aries) is a long-haired goat with long, slightly curved horns and prominent testicles standing to the right.
- TAURUS (Labelled: Thaurus) is a full bull with short, curved horns that stands to the left
- fol. 18v GEMINI (labelled: Gemini) are two male nude youths with wings on their shoulders and wearing long capes. They walk to the right and turn their heads to look back to the left. Their inner arms are draped across each other's shoulders. The Left Twin holds a sickle and the Right Twin holds a harp.
- fol. 19r CYGNUS (labelled: Cignus) is a large goose with a long, misshapen and curling beak. It stands facing to the right and has its wings outstretched behind it.
- AQUILA (labelled: Vultur volans aquila dicit) is an eagle standing to the right, with its wings outstretched on either side.
- fol. 19v AQUILA (labelled: Vultur cadens aquila dicitur) is an eagle standing to the right with its wings outstretched. A small human figure sits on its left wing and gestures to the bird. Aquila stands on an arrow with its tip to the right.
- CETUS (labelled: Coetus id est ballena) is a fish with a long, pointed snout and a body contorted into a 'C' shape. It faces to the right.
- fol. 20r ERIDANUS (labelled: Erianus) is a nude male figure who reclines on his side, leaning on his right elbow and extending his right arm to the left. He reclines on a rocky landscape.
- fol. 20v FIGURA SONANTIS CANONEM (labelled) is depicted as a female figure seated on a bench playing a psaltery-like instrument, which she holds on her lap.
- DELPHINUS (labelled: Delphinus) is a large fish with a pointed snout and an arched back facing to the left.

ORION (labelled: Orion) is a male figure who walks to the left and is dressed in armour. He holds a long sword aloft in one hand and has one shoulder covered by a shield that has ORION on it.

fol. 21r CANIS MAIOR (labelled: Canis) is a large dog with w pointed snout, open jaws and its tongue sticking out. It stands facing to the left and has long, pointed ears.

fol. 21v LEPUS (labelled: Lepus) is a hare shown climbing up a rocky escarpment to the left.

fol. 22r ARGO/NAVIS (labelled: Navis argon) is a full ship with no sails, but pulleys on ropes coming from its mast. There is a raised stern galley and two steering oars. In front of the shaped bow, there is a small turtle.

AUSTRONOTUS (labelled: Astronoth) is a female centaur with prominent human breast and animal dugs, who leaps to the left and has her arms outstretched to either side.

DEMON MERIDIONALIS (labelled: Demon meridionalis vel galasia) is a seated woman covered by a mantle who raises her hands to her face. In front of her, there is another female figure flying to the right, dressed in a toga and holding an almond-shaped structure that is covered with 14 stars.

fol. 22v PISCIS AUSTRINUS (labelled: Piscis magnus) is a large fish, with its belly uppermost and its head towards the right. On its belly, there is a smaller fish, with its head also to the right.

ARA (labelled: Puteaus vel sacrarius) is a square altar standing on two steps. In the top of the altar, there is a circular hole from which red flames issue. There are four winged demons flying around the altar.

fol. 23r SATURN (labelled: Saturnus) is a male figure who stnds slightly to the right and he dressed in armour. He carries a scythe in his right hand and has a sword at his belt. He holds a long shield that covers his left shoulder and is decorated with a sword-bearing rampant wolf.

fol. 23v JUPITER (labelled: Juppiter) is a standing male figure dressed in a flat cap, robe and a log cape with a tartan reverse. He has a money belt tied at his waist and holds a bunch of three flowers in each hand.

MARS (labelled: Mars) is a standing male figure dressed in a suit of armour. He holds a long spear, tip downwards, in his right hand. In his left hand, he holds a crossbow, tip downwards, and has a shield on his left elbow. He has a long sword hanging from his right hip. He stands in a landscape with a tree to the left, from which there is hung a quiver of arrows.

SOL-APOLLO (labelled: Sol) is a standing figure with long, light-coloured hair (possibly female), who stands in a horse-drawn quadriga, facing to the right and holding a long taper in his/her right hand. She/he holds the reins in her left hand. In front, above the horses, there is a depiction of the Sun with a human face, shining in the sky.

fol. 24r CENTAUUS (labelled: Centaurus) is a male centaur, walking to the right with his left front leg raised. He has a belt separating his two halves. He has a small animal cradled on his right forearm, with its legs pointing upwards. A censer hangs from his right hand. His left hand holds a long pole that rests on his left shoulder. There is an animal hanging by its heels from the end of the pole.

fol. 24v HYDRA, CRATER, CORVUS (labelled: Serpens vel Hydra) is a long snake with a dragon's head set diagonally to the left, with its head reaching to bite the leaves on a tree, which stand to the left. Crater is a tall vase with two handles and is set in the middle of the Snake's back and there is a small pigeon-like Corvus standing on the Snake's tail, facing to the left.

fol. 25r CANIS MINOR (labelled: Anticanis) is a dog that stands facing the left, with a sharp snout and its mouth open, showing its tongue. It has upright, pointed ears.

EQUUS SECUNDUS (labelled Equus secundus) is a full horse galloping to the left. It has large wings on its back and smaller wings on each hoof.

fol. 25v TERABELLUM (labelled: Terrebellum sive viruplum) is a T-shaped awl.

VEXILLIUM (labelled: Vexillium) is a large flag with 5 streamers attached to a spear.

fol. 26r VENUS (labelled: Venus) is a female figure standing slightly to the right, dressed in a long gown with long, tapered sleeves. She holds bunches of flowers in each hand and stand on a sack (or clouds?)

MERCURY (labelled: Mercurius) is a figure seated in a high-backed cathedra, holding a book in his left hand near his lap, and a two straight sticks vertically in his right hand.



- fol. 26v LUNA (labelled: Luna) is a female figure seated in a horse-drawn biga to the right. She sits on a cushion and holds a taper vertically in each hand. Above her to the right, the Moon has a crescent marked and a human face in the centre.
- fol. 27r CANCER (labelled: Cancer) is a round-bodied crab with its face upwards. It has two muscular arms with pincers and four smaller legs on each side.
- LEO (Labelled Leo) stands to the left with his right forepaw raised. He sticks out his tongue and his heraldic tail is raised in an 'S'-shape.
- fol. 27v VIRGO (labelled: Virgo) is a standing female figure with large wings. She holds a stick vertically with her right hand and points upwards with her left hand.
- LIBRA (labelled: Libra) is a standing male figure, dressed like a burgher with a long cape and flat cap. He holds a large pair of scales in front of him with his right hand.
- fol. 28r SCORPIO (labelled: Scorpio) is a scorpion facing to the left. It has two large pincers and four jointed legs on each side of its body. His tail is curled and has a pincer-shaped sting at the end.
- SAGITTARIUS (labelled: Sagittarius) is a centaur that leaps to the left. It has lyre-shaped horns on its head a beard and sheeplike ears. There is a headless animal standing on its back. The centaur has a bow and arrows, holding the frame of the bow in his left hand, and there is an arrow, with its tip to the left, between its legs.
- CAPRICORN (labelled: Capricornus) faces to the right. The front part has a goat's face, medium-length, curved horns and two legs extended forward. The back half is a series of curls that ends in a truncated tail from which three squidlike tentacles emerge.
- fol. 28v AQUARIUS (labelled: Aquarius) is a nude male figure who stands slight to the right, he holds a large urn vertically in front of his body from which water pours, he looks to the left.
- PISCES (labelled: Piscis) are two fish, facing in opposite directions, belly-to-belly, with pointed snouts and their mouths connected by a stream.
- fol. 29r DRACO INTER ARCTOS (labelled: De ursa maiori et minori) show the two bears facing in opposite directions, back to back, and rushing towards the body of an S-shaped Draco.

Draco is a snake with its dragon's head towards the bottom of the oage. It has a serrated backbone. The lower bear is larger. The smaller bear stands on Draco's tail.

fol. 29v DRACO (labelled: Draco id est caput at cauda draconis) [!] is a creature with a dragon's head, a birdlike beak and long, thin ears. It has bird's claws on its forefeet. The back of the body is segmented like a crawfish and the tail ends in three tentacle-like streamers (see Capricorn above).

HERCULES (labelled: Hercules) is a bearded, nude man kneeling to the left. He holds a sword vertically in his left hand and holds the body of a man-faced lion (see the paws with claws) draped over his right arm. In front of him, to the left, there is a tree around which a dragon-headed snake is wrapped.

fol. 30r CORONA BOREALIS (labelled: Corona) is a leafy wreath with two tassels at the bottom.

OPHIUCHUS (labelled: Serpentarius) is a nude man who stands with his back to the viewer. He has a dragon-headed Snake wrapped around his waist, holding the neck with his left hand and the tail with his right hand. He stands on the back of a large Scorpion, which faces to the right, has two front pincers, 4 segmented legs on each side and a curved tail with a pincer at the tip.

fol. 31v BOOTES (labelled Boethes) is a standing male figure wearing a toga and with a brimmed peasant's hat on his head. He holds a sickle aloft with his right hand and a spear vertically with his left hand. He has a thick belt at his waist that bears a long, straight sword. He stands to the right, but looks backwards to the left.

AURIGA (labelled: Agitator sive eritonius) is a male figure wearing a toga. He stands in an open-slatted cart, which is being pulled to the right by a pair of oxen and a pair of horses. He holds a spear vertically in his right hand and there is a small animal on his left shoulder and two smaller animals head in his left hand (with which he also holds the reins).

fol. 31r CEPHEUS (labelled: Zepheus) is a standing male figure dressed in a belted, knee-length tunic. He holds his arms extended to either side. He wears a long sword and a money bag at his waist. He turns his head to the left.

CASSIOPEIA (labelled: Casepia) is a female figure dressed in a toga, exposing her right breast. She holds her arms extended to either side and there is blood pouring from her right hand. She sits in a high-backed cathedra that has square turrets at either side.

fol. 31v PEGASUS (labelled: Equus vespertinus) is the front half of a winged horse that faces to the right. Its mouth is open and its legs are crossed.

ANDROMEDA (labelled: Andromada) is a female figure with long, flowing hair, who is dressed in a short tunic that exposes 'her' male genitalia. Her arms are tied to two trees that spring from a rocky landscape. She looks towards the left.

fol. 32r PERSEUS (labelled: Perseus) is a nude male wearing a long cape, who strides to the left with his buttocks exposed to the viewer. He holds a knobby stick aloft with his right hand and the decapitated head of a male figure in front of him with his left hand. His front is covered by a long shield that is decorated with the label PERSEUS. He has long, batlike wings on his feet.

TRIANGULUS (labelled: Triangulus) is an equilateral triangle.

fol. 32v PLEIADES (labelled: Chiocha sive gallina) is 7 female figures, standing behind a parapet so that only their upper halves are visible. There are 4 on the top row and 3 on the bottom row. They appear to be conversing and one holds a book.

LYRA (labelled: Lira instrumentum pulsabile) depicts a curved shape with pointed ends. Across the widest part, between the two 'horns', there is a gridlike structure with a series 8 valves that appear to be misunderstood representations of the lyre's strings. The bottom of the instrument is filled with curved cloudlike shapes.

### notes

BAUER 1983, p. 9 dates this to c. 1510; ACKERMANN to c. 1450 on account of the information in the tables and calendars; BLUME/ HAFFNER/METZGER 2016 follow this earlier dating.

The close relationship between the constellation and planet-god illustrations and those in BL, Add MS 41600 was first noted by BAUER 1983, who suggested that the Wellcome figures may be direct copies from the BL ones. BLUME/HAFFNER/METZGER 2016, have also pointed out the closeness of the Wellcome illustrations to those in Florence, BNC, Magl. XXI, 22 and the Paduan ms, Munich, BSB, cod 10268.

### bibliography

SAXL/MEIER 1953.

**MOORAT** 1962, I, pp. 348-89.

**BAUER** 1982, p. 9 and n. 96.

Italian (?) and dates to c. 1510 and says is a direct copy of London BL, Add 41600 (following Moorat)

**ACKERMANN** 2009, pp. 511-13.

N Italian (Venice?) and dates to c. 1450 on account of the Paschal and other calendrical tables; notes relationship to London BL Add 41600

**BLUME/HAFFNER/METZGER** 2016, II, i, 45,48, 311-18; II, iii, figs. 215-17.

with a detailed description of the contents and the relationship with similar mss - esp. London BL Add MS 41600 and Florence BNC, Magl XXII (22). Note that the tables and rotae were calculated in the late 1430s and early 1440s. The table for Dominical letters runs from 1410-1450. The rota for Jewish Passover on fol. 15v bears the original date of 1430 and as well as a later date of 1468. Therefore, they suggest a date to c. 1450 for this section. (They discount the watermark identified by MOORAT 1962 and point out that there are similar watermarks recorded for the mid-15th century.). They suggest that it is not a much later copy of Add 41600, but probably a sister manuscript, 'and perhaps even its model'.

A digital version of the manuscript is available on-line at <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/sy7mnwef/items>.

The description there describes the last two items in the manuscript as:

1. [Anon.] *Geometrica cathoptrica. Arithmetica. Del misurare aqua* [c. 1575]
2. Lettera sopra il nuovo Calendario Gregoriano. 1579, which is signed 'M.M.' and addressed to Antonio Justiniano (Giustiniani).

It identifies the water marks on the first two folia of the computus as BRIQUET 6292 (Florence, c. 1509) and, therefore, assign the incorrect date of 1510-79 to the entire miscellanea (as of July 2023).

The provenance is noted as: The spine is lettered 'Misce[llanea] di Mate[matica]'. Ex-libris of Walter Sneyd. Catalogue entry from the Sale of Sneyd's Library at Sotheby's 16/12/1903, Lot 216 (?).