

Venice

ITALY


Biblioteca Marciana

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Ms VIII, 22 (2760)

ps-Bede, *De signis caeli*

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beginning 13th century

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text

ff.1r-31r (in black ink with red, orange and blue foliate incipit initials and red openings to each chapter)

Spera celi quater senis horis dum revolvitur. Omnis stelle fixe celo quem cum ea ambiunt — galli sine vocibus. Incipit liber de astronomia de forma celi & quomodo decurrit inclinatum. Celum igitur inclinatum volvitur a meridiano ... (ending calendrical diagram) anno xviii.v [KL] v.i. (= Nimrod (?), *Liber de astronomia*)

fol. 31v (in sepia ink with alternating red-orange and blue initials and with contrasting flourishes for each chapter)

Helix arctus maior habet autem in capite stellas obscuras vii. in spatula .i. super pectus .i. in pede i. ... (cf. Maass 1898, p. 582)

fol. 36r Anticanis dicitur subtus geminos parere bene habet stellas .iii. quarum una splendidior ceteris est et ideo anticanis vocatur eo quod contraria sit cani. (cf. Maass 1898, p. 594)

ff. 36v-41v Computus with notes and glosses in a number of later hands and diagrams on ff. 40r, 40v and 41v.

ff. 37r-41r Incipit doctrina compoti. Quoniam ut platonis ... totidem quam december.

ff. 42r-42v piece of vellum formerly folded and addressed like a letter

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### illustrations

- fol. 1r an astronomer wearing a long red-orange robe looking through a blue sighting tube with a red 'S' at the far end and set on a green pillar support with red spiral decoration; he looks at a red-orange star (accompanies Nimrod (?), *Liber de astronomia*)
- fol. 1v diagram of a red and orange circle labelled: Celum inclinatum sine stellis (in blue)  
  
image of Atlas holding the a red and orange circle above his head the outer layer has stars on it and the inner circle has a sun-face and a crescent moon; labelled in blue: Celum / et stellis / Sol / luna / in oriente / in occidente
- fol. 2r four nude male figures ( depicting the winds) standing at the four cardinal points with their heads centred on a orange-red sphere, each with his arms above his head as if holding the sphere
- fol. 2v four nude male figures (depicting the the winds) at cardinal points with their feet resting of a central red-orange sphere; each has wings on his head and holds a winged disembodied head in each hand
- fol. 3r diagram with twelve clothed figures (depicting the 'XII fortidunibus') with orange highlights blowing horns with wings on their heads; they stand against a blue background with their feet on a central white circle; at the centre of the circle, there are two dragons, each biting the other's tail, which surround an orange globe; they are labelled: ascensio/ descensio.
- fol. 3v diagram of the order of the spheres, with each orb in a slightly different colour and the heavenly bodies in orange; interestingly Sol and Mars are on the third circle from the centre with Mercury on the next, then Jupiter, Venus, and Saturnus
- fol. 4r zodiac scheme centred on *Draco inter arctos* (with Draco as a blue snake and both bears standing with backs towards Draco's head, facing inwards); Aries and Taurus at the bottom of the diagram with each sign set within a blue, white or orange circle. Aries and Taurus facing in the same direction, Taurus full; Gemini embracing; man holding Libra; Sagittarius as a centaur shooting a small animal outside the rota

fol. 4v-31r More diagrams including:

fol. 4v: climates

fol. 5r: twelve signs

fol. 6r: twelve months

fol. 6v: inclination of the polar axis

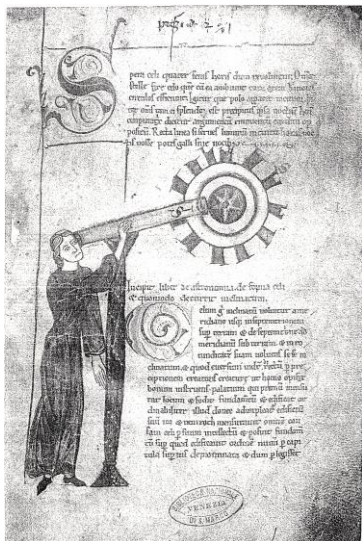
ff. 7r and 7v: signs and planetary powers

fol. 8r: planets and astrological powers

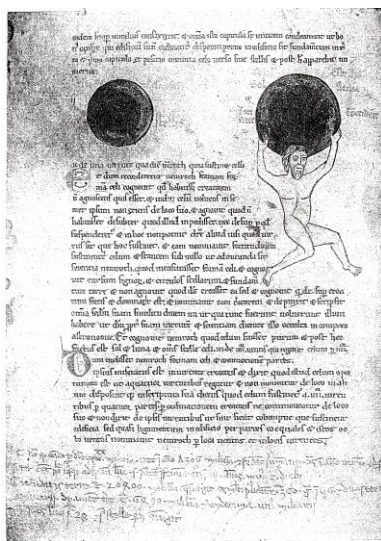
fol. 10v: differing lengths of day

fol. 11r: *Draco inter arctos* set between intersecting circle of the Sun and the Moon = eclipses;

ff. 13r, 13v, 14r: *Draco inter arctos* set within circular diagrams re: phases of the Moon (on 14r, odd DRACO as a figure 8)



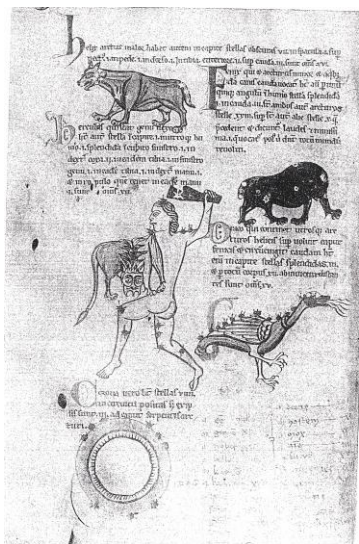
fol. 1r



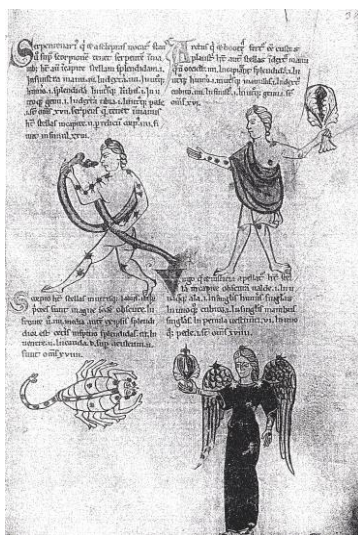
fol. 1v



fol. 4r



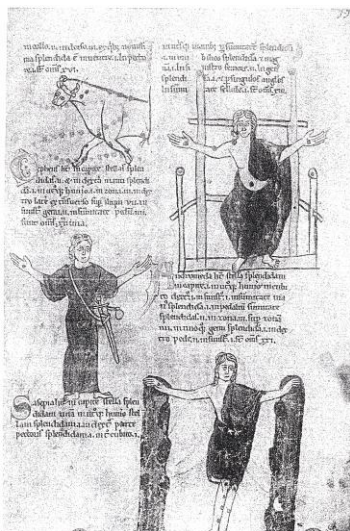
fol. 31v



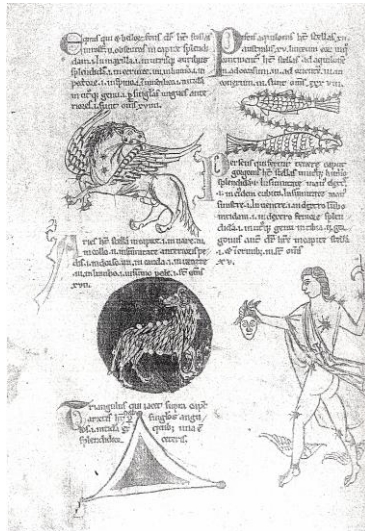
fol. 32r



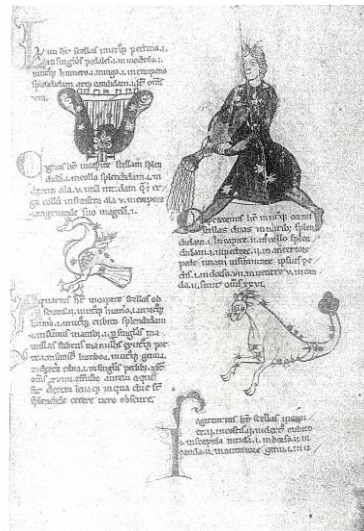
fol. 32v



fol. 33r



fol. 33v

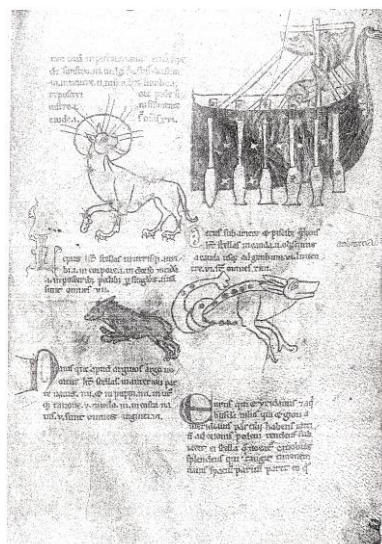


fol. 34r





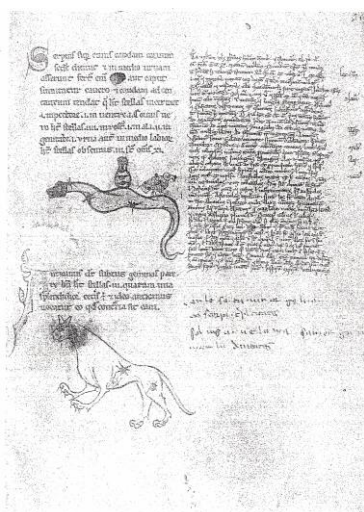
fol. 34v



fol. 35r



fol. 35v



fol. 36r

ff.31v-36r Highly-coloured drawings with red-orange, green and blue predominating of 40 constellation groupings set between paragraphs of text within two columns to which text has been added later (note how the text runs over the figures in URSA MAIOR, CEPHEUS, etc.); the stars are marked as red-orange dots with rays or as white dots depending on the colour of the background; note that the order of the constellations is confused in the opening text, so that it runs: URSA MAIOR, HERCULES, CORONA BOREALIS, URSA MINOR, DRACO -- this would seem to suggest that the model for this two-columned format manuscript was based on a manuscript originally composed in long lines with single or double images per page (hypothetically: 1. URSA MAIOR, 2. URSA MINOR and DRACO and 3. HERCULES and CORONA BOREALIS, which were then mis-paginated to read 1, 3, 2).

fol. 31v **URSA MAIOR** is blue and walks to left with its long tail held down; its mouth is open and it has large circular toes; also the musculature is somewhat decorative; it has 7 stars in its head, 1 on its nose, 1 on its right foreleg, 1 on its chest, 1 on its left shoulder, 2 on the right hind leg and 3 on its tail, or 16 stars in all

**HERCULES** is nude and steps to the left with his left leg bent and leading; the orientation of his body is not clear as his lower torso is twisted so that his buttocks are visible, but his upper torso seems to face the viewer (note the odd orientation of the following hand); he holds a tan lion's skin (with face, three legs and a tail visible) draped over his outstretched leading (right?) arm and he holds an orange club in his upraised left (?) arm above his head; he has 1 star on his head, 1 on each shoulder, 1 on his left forearm, 1 (or 2) on his club, 2 in his right thigh, 1 on each knee, 1 on each calf, and 1 on the skin of the lion, or 12 or 13 stars in all

**URSA MINOR** is red-orange and stands to the right with its head turned back against his body and a humped shoulder; its front feet are splayed; the colour has been abraded, so it is difficult to see the stars, but it appears to have 1 star on his back, 1 on each front leg (?), 1 on the right rear leg and 3 on the tail, or 7 stars in all

**CORONA BOREALIS** is depicted as four concentric circles (red-orange, yellow, red-orange and brown) the innermost of which one is lobed; it has 9 stars

**DRACO** is a two-legged fire-breathing dragon that faces to the right; it has a blue body and a red face; it has white bird's feet and its red-orange and white wings are held close to its body; its long tail curls to make a S-shaped twist and the tip points upwards; it has 3 white stars in the head and 12 along the back, or 15 stars in all

fol. 32r **OPHIUCHUS** is nude and walks to the left, but, as with **HERCULES**, the orientation of his body is unclear as his buttocks face the viewer, but the top of his torso certainly faces the viewer if one correctly reads the positions of the hands; he frowns into the red face of a blue-bodied **SERPENS**, which he holds so that it that with makes an 'X' across his waist; there is a kink in the Snake's neck and its tail hangs downwards; Ophiuchus has 1 star on his head, 1 in each shoulder, 2 on each upper arm, 2 on his right forearm and 1 on his left forearm, 2 at his waist, 1 on each knee and 1 on his left shin, or 15 stars in all; there do not appear to be any stars on **SERPENS**

**SCORPIO** is depicted separately and faces to the right; it has a oval, segmented body with human eyes and two larger claws facing forward with three smaller claws on each side; the tail is smooth and curves upward, ending in two lobes: it has 4 stars in its face, 8 on its back, 5 in the tail and 2 on the tip of the tail, or 19 stars in all

**BOOTES** (Arctus) stands facing the viewer with his arms outstretched at shoulder height and his feet splayed; he is dressed in a heavy blue wrap that hangs from his right shoulder and covers his chest and has a short white skirt peeping out beneath it; his right arm is outstretched with the palm open and facing upwards; his left holds a white and orange plant with large acanthus-shaped leaves upraised behind his head; he has 1 star in his head, 1 on each shoulder, 1 on each nipple, 3 on his upper right arm and 4 on his right forearm, 1 in his left elbow, and 1 on each knee, or 15 stars in all star in all

**VIRGO** stands facing the viewer wearing a long, slim-fitting orange gown with wide sleeves that end at the elbow; the tighter white sleeves of her undershirt extend to her wrists; she has yellow open wings with orange outlining and her grey hair is exposed; she holds a plant in her upraised right hand (a bit like that held by **BOOTES**, except it appears to have a spindle inside it and there is a *fleur-de-lys* at the top as a pinnacle); she holds her left hand down by her side; she has 1 star on her head, 1 on each wing, 1 white star on each shoulder, 1 on each elbow, 1 on each hand and 1 on each foot, or 11 stars in all

fol. 32v **GEMINI** stand facing the viewer and are placed underneath a curved niche (against a blue background with white dots) that is supported on the right side by an orange column; they are dressed in loose long tunics and cloaks that fall vertically from both shoulders; the left Twin in a light blue robe with a orange mantle and red boots; and the right Twin in a red robe with a light blue dress with white boots; the right Twin has his right arm around the left Twin's shoulder and the right Twin holds a white lyre in his mantle-covered hand, while the left Twin makes a pointing gesture with his right hand; the left Twin has 1 star in his head, 1 on each shoulder, 1 on each thigh and, possibly, 1 on the left knee, or 5 or 6 stars in all; the right Twin has 1 star on his head, 1 on his left shoulder, 1 on his left hand and 1 on each knee, or 5 stars in all

**Cancer** has a circular body, faces to the right, and has four nearly identical claws on each side; it is set within a circular frame (the Moon?) and has 1 star in the nose, 4 on the body, 4 in the top legs and 6 in the bottom legs; or 15 stars in all

**LEO** is green and stands facing to the left with his front legs extended in front of him; his mouth is open and his tail curls between the back legs and then around the left thigh so that the tip rises above his back and ends in a very large tuft; he has 3 stars in his face, 2 on his neck, 3 along his back, 4 on his chest, 1 on his right hind thigh and 1 at the end of his tail; or 14 stars in all

**AURIGA** stands in boxy white chariot with large orange wheels and a circular green shape set behind him; he wears a red mantle and holds a green conical shield with an orange boss in front of his body with his left hand and holds a spear to his side in his right hand; his hair is blonde; the chariot drawn by three prancing horses, one of which faces back towards the driver; the harnesses of the horses are orange and there is no evidence of goats; he has 1 star in his head, 1 on each shoulder, 1 in his right elbow and 1 in his right hand, or 5 stars in all

fol. 33r **TAURUS** is depicted as half a bull, walking to the left; he has short curling horns and is cut-off by a vertical line at the right; he has 3 stars in each horn, 1 on each eye and 1 at the tip of his nose, 2 in his neck, 3 along his back, 1 on his chest, 1 on each front knee and 1 on his belly, or 18 stars in all

**CEPHEUS** stands facing the viewer with his arms outstretched to either side at shoulder height, but with a slight bend in his elbows; he wears a long, loose green gown with wide, elbow-length sleeves; his head is uncovered and he seems to resemble a woman more than a man (comparing him to CASSIOPEIA and ANDROMEDA on the same page); he has a sword on his left hip that is slung from a band that he wears hanging from his right shoulder so that it crosses his chest; he also seems to have a bag at his left hip (or the top of the scabbard?); he is barefoot and has 2 stars in the head, 1 on each shoulder, 1 in his right hand, 5 (?) in his lap and 2 on his left knee, or around 12 stars

**CASSIOPEIA** (spelled: Sasepia) is seated in a stick throne with blue vertical uprights; her arms are outstretched to the side at shoulder height and her palms are open and face upwards; she is dressed in an orange mantle falls over her left shoulder and exposes her right breast; her hair is exposed and her feet are bare; she has 1 star on her right shoulder, 1 on the right elbow, 1 on each hand, 1 in her belly and 4 in her throne, or 9 stars in all

**ANDROMEDA** stands facing the viewer with her arms outstretched at shoulder height; she wears a kind of *tunica exomis* (green mantle, orange skirt) that exposes her right shoulder and her blonde hair is exposed; she rests her hands on two tall, green tree



stumps with the cut-off branches marked with orange; she has 1 star on each shoulder, 1 on each elbow, 1 on her right hand, 3 at her waist, 2 in her right thigh, 1 on each knee, 3 on her right leg and 2 on her left leg (or 17 visible stars); her feet are cut off by the bottom of the page

fol. 33v **PEGASUS** is a full-bodied, winged white horse with red and orange highlights in his wings and body (there is a fine red line at his hips where the cut-off should be, but the rear section of the body appears to be by the same hand as the front part); he rears to the right, but turns his head back to the left, resting his chin on the top rib of his outstretched left wing (proto-biting?); he has pronounced male genitalia (as do the horses pulling AURIGA's cart) and he has a very long tail that hangs down; he has 1 star in each ear, 4 in his face, 3 in the mane, 2 in his neck, 1 on each front knee, 2 in each front hoof, 1 on his back and 1 on his belly, or 19 stars in all

**ARIES** stands facing to the right with his left forefoot raised; he turns his head to look backwards to the left; he is set within a roundel (like CANCER), but this one has an orange background; he has short curled horns, long fleece and a very long tail that hangs downwards; he has 4 stars in his face, 2 on his neck, 3 on his belly, 4 along his back, 1 on his right hind knee, 1 in his right front leg and 1 on his tail, or 16 stars in all

**TRIANGULUS** is two nested (white exterior, orange interior) triangles with the top two sides concave and the bottom side flat; it has a star in each of the angles, or 3 stars in all

**PISCES** swim in opposite directions (top to the left and bottom to the right), with both their backs upwards and are connected at their mouths by a slightly curving line; the top fish has 12 stars, the cord has 12 stars and the bottom fish has 15 stars, or 39 stars in all

**PERSEUS** walks barefoot and on his tip-toes to the left with the left leg leading; the orientation of his body is confused (as with some of the previous figures), with his buttocks facing the viewer on his lower half, but the orientation of his hands suggests that the top of his torso faces the viewer; he is nude except for orange-highlighted cloak, which is draped over his right (?) shoulder and then flows out behind him; his blonde hair is exposed and he has red-highlighted wings on his feet; he holds the Medusa's head in his right (?) hand in front of him and holds the *harpe* vertically in his left (?) hand; he has 2 stars in his left shoulder, 1 on his chest, 1 on his left hip, 2 blue

stars at his waist, 1 on each knee, 1 on his left foot and 1 on his right calf, 4 in the Medusa's head and 1 in his left (?) hand, or 15 stars in all

fol. 34r **LYRA** is shaped like an orange lily with a series of vertical strings (seven orange and seven black that are connected to a crossbar with seven knobs on it; there is 1 star on the bridge, 2 on the strings and 4 white stars in the body, or 7 stars in all

**CYGNUS** stands facing to the left with its wings close to its body; it raises its left foot and has a long curved neck; it has 1 star on the head, 1 on the neck, 1 on the chest, 1 on the tail, 3 on the body and 3 in the wings, or 10 stars in all

**AQUARIUS** strides to left and wearing a calf-length orange robe that is tight on the top, but has a full skirt, and green stockings; he holds a very large green urn with an orange mouth in his arms in front of him (with the base tucked into his chest); water pours downwards from the spout to the left; he has 2 stars in the head, 1 on each shoulder, 1 on each nipple, 2 on his left thigh, 1 on his right thigh, 1 on each ankle and 1 on the right foot and there are at least 5 white stars in the urn (some abraded)

**CAPRICORN** faces to the left with its right front leg raised and the other one extended; it has very short horns and triple corkscrew tail that ends in a trefoil; it has 1 star in each horn, 3 in the face, 1 on the neck, 2 on the chest, 2 on the right front leg, 3 along the back, 4 on the belly, and 5 on the tail, or 22 stars in all

fol. 34v **SAGITTARIUS** is a centaur that rushes to the left with both forefeet raised; he has wild orange hair on his human head and a frilly, upraised tail on his orange, equine half; his human half wears a tight-fitting grey 'hair-shirt' and holds bow extended in front of him with left hand, pulling the string with his right' his stars include 1 black star on the head, 2 on the left arm, 1 on the bowstring, 2 on the bow, 4 on the arrow, 2 on his human back, 2 on his equine back, 1 in each front knee, 1 on each front foot, and 2 on his tail, or 20 stars in all

**AQUILA** stands facing to the left, but turns his head towards the right so that its curved beak nearly touches his raised right wing; his body is marked with orange highlights and he stands on **SAGITTA**, the point of which is at the left; he has 1 star on the head, 1 on the beak, 1 on the chest and 1 on the right leg, or 4 stars in all; **SAGITTA** has no stars.

**DELPHINUS** is a fat-bellied fish that swims to the right and has a dog's face and a horn on his head; his mouth, eyebrows and backbone are orange and he has a very widely-

fanned tail; he has 1 on the mouth, 3 on the back, 3 on the belly fin and 2 on the end of the tail, or 9 stars in all

**ORION** faces the viewer as he walks to the right with his left leg leading; he is dressed in a short blue cloak that covers his left shoulder and arm and exposes his right shoulder; his short skirt is orange; he holds a long sword raised in his right hand and holds the top of an empty grey scabbard with an orange mouth in his left hand in front of his chest; he has 1 on his right shoulder, 1 on his right elbow, 1 on his right hand, 3 at the waist, 3 in his cloak (above the left upper arm) and 1 on each knee, or 10 stars in all

fol. 35r **CANIS MAIOR** stands to left with his right foreleg bent, but looks backwards over his back to the upper right; he has an orange halo and rays coming from his head; short pointed ears and a long thin tail that is held downwards; he has 1 star in the mouth, 2 on the neck, 1 on the chest, 3 on the belly, 3 on the left front leg, 1 on the right front foot, 1 on the left hind foot and 1 on the tail, or 13 stars in all

**LEPUS** leaps to left with both front legs raised and is blue; it has 1 star in each ear, 2 in the body, 1 on the back and 1 on each hind leg, or 7 stars in all.

**ARGO** (Navis) is depicted as half an orange boat with a vertical cut-off on the left side and a curved end surmounted by a dragon's head (?) on the right end; there is a mast with an orange sail on the deck, which seems to be supported by 6 wooden beams (rigging ropes ?) and there are six oars placed vertically along the hull; there are 3 stars in the sail, 1 in the ship, 5 on the top of the oars, 3 in the bow, 5 along the hull, 2 in the keel and 3 on the oars, or 22 stars in all

**CETUS** faces to the right and has a odd, aardvark-like face with long ears and a long snout, a double corkscrew tail and two spindly front legs which are extended below it; it has 5 stars on the belly, 5 along the back and 3 in the tail, or 13 stars in all

fol. 35v **Eridanus** (Eurus/ yridanus) is man who appears to be seated slightly to the right; he wears an orange toga with green interior, and holds the stem of a large black and white palm frond in his right hand so that the upper stem of the plants rests on his shoulder; his left hand grasps his left knee; he sits to the right of a large, upside-down green urn with yellow decoration from which water issues and flows under his feet; he has 3 stars on each forearm, 8 on the urn and 1 in the mouth of the urn, or 15 stars in all

**PISCIS AUSTRINUS** is scaly, long-bodied fish that swims to the left and has 9 stars marked

**ARA** is a complex, maze-like orange line that seems to form two boxes; it has 4 black stars

**CENTAURUS** leaps to the right with both forefeet raised; his human half faces the viewer and he twists his head to look to the left; he holds an upside-down, blue animal (**BESTIA/LUPUS**) holding **Lupus** ( ) by its shoulders in his outstretched left hand in front of him so that its rump rests on the man's head; he holds a green plant in his right hand and the stem rises to rest on his right shoulder; his human half is nude, there is a jagged join between his halves and his equine part is orange; he has 3 stars in the head, 1 star on each shoulder, 1 on his chest, 1 on his left elbow, 1 on each forefoot, 1 on his equine chest, 1 on his right front shoulder, 3 on his belly, 2 on his back and 2 on his right hind leg, or 18 stars in all

fol. 36r **HYDRA** is a lumpy blue snake with an orange face that moves to the left, with its body forming a right angle (drooping down at the tail); it has 3 stars

**CRATER** is a two-handled urn placed on the central hump of **HYDRA**'s back; it has 3 stars

**CORVUS** stands on the second hump in **HYDRA**'s body, just before the body dips downwards; it faces backwards and has 5 stars

**CANIS MINOR** (anticanis) faces to the left and has a body like a lion; it has short pointed ears and a long thin tail that hangs down; it has 3 stars

### notes

The illustrations co-incide with those found in the **De signis caeli** I family, which also contains Oxford Laud 644 and Padua 27.

*De signis caeli* (missing chaps 41 and puts 4 before 3) = Maass 1898, pp. 582-94.

According to McGurk IV, 1966, pp. On parchment; ff 1-36: Liber de astronomia 'Spera celi quarter senis horis dum ... revolvitur. Dialogue between Nemroth and his disciple Ioannancones discussing astronomical topics, anonymous author with some knowledge of Arabic things, with figures.

ff. 37r-41r: Incipit doctrina compoti: Quoniam, ut platonis sonat sentential, non solum nobis nati sumus, sed toti mundo.

Current binding is: i (paper)+i (vellum sheet with 14th century liturgical text on it); 42, + i (paper)

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### bibliography

VALENTINELLI 1871, IV, p. 255.

HASKINS 1924, p. 342: for Nimrod

VAN DE VYVER 1936, esp. pp. 684-87: re: other mss of Nimrod.

McGURK IV 1966 p. xvi, pp. 84-85: rough parchment, ii + 42, 275 x 170; fly-leaf ii has 14th century liturgical text.

OBRIST 1977, p.       .

dell'ERA 1979, p. 70.



