

Spelling and Punctuation Practice in London, Wellcome Library, MS 3731 (ff. 3r–43r, f. 125v)

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Abstract

A large and growing body of literature has investigated the standardization process of the English language in the Late Modern English period (Auer 939–948, Percy 55–79, Tiekens-Boon van Ostade 37–51), with various factors contributing to it, such as the printing press, spelling reforms, normative grammars and dictionaries. In the process of standardization, which “involves *the suppression of the optional variability*” in a language (Milroy and Milroy 6, original emphasis), prescriptivism played a crucial role, and it has been argued that, by the early eighteenth century, English spelling had become standardized and stable (Scragg 80). However, Tiekens-Boon van Ostade points out that in the eighteenth century two spelling systems coexisted, i.e., a public and a private one (11). The present study provides additional evidence to the existing knowledge of the topic through the analysis of the spelling and punctuation system of the text in London, Wellcome Library, MS 3731, an eighteenth-century collection of medical instructions and cookery recipes. By means of the study of contractions, superscript letters, capitalization and line breaks, this article unveils new insights into the variability and characteristics of the spelling and punctuation system in this period. The findings provide valuable evidence and enrich our understanding of the broader standardization process in English historical linguistics.

Keywords: spelling, punctuation, medical manuscripts, standardization, Late Modern English, MS Wellcome 3731.

Características ortográficas en Londres, Biblioteca Wellcome, MS 3731 (ff. 3r–43r, f. 125v)**Resumen**

Un amplio y creciente volumen de estudios ha investigado el proceso de estandarización de la lengua inglesa en el periodo del inglés moderno tardío (Auer 939–948, Percy 55–79, Tieken-Boon van Ostade 37–51), siendo varios los factores coadyuvantes, tales como la imprenta, las reformas ortográficas, las gramáticas normativas y los diccionarios. En este proceso de estandarización, que “implica la *supresión de la variabilidad opcional*” en una lengua (Milroy y Milroy 6, énfasis en el original), el prescriptivismo jugó un papel clave y se ha argumentado que, para principios del siglo XVIII, la ortografía del inglés se había estandarizado y estabilizado (Scragg 80). No obstante, Tieken-Boon van Ostade señala que, en este periodo, existían dos sistemas ortográficos, uno público y otro privado (11). El presente trabajo contribuye al conocimiento ya existente y aporta información adicional sobre este proceso a través del análisis de la ortografía del texto albergado en Londres, Biblioteca Wellcome, MS 3731, una colección de instrucciones médicas y recetas culinarias del siglo XVIII. Mediante el estudio del uso de las contracciones, los superíndices, la capitalización y los saltos de línea, este artículo muestra nuevas aportaciones acerca de la variabilidad y las características del sistema de ortografía en el siglo XVIII. Los hallazgos ofrecen un testimonio significativo y enriquecen nuestra comprensión del proceso de estandarización en la lingüística histórica inglesa desde un punto de vista más amplio.

Palabras clave: ortografía, manuscritos médicos, estandarización, inglés moderno tardío, MS Wellcome 3731.

1. Introduction

For the purpose of this paper, the level of orthographic standardization in the eighteenth century will be assessed through an examination of a Late Modern English scientific manuscript. Specifically, this article investigates the spelling and punctuation practice found in London, Wellcome Library, MS 3731, an eighteenth-century collection primarily consisting of medical recipes, with a few cookery ones, used in the private sphere. The study focuses on the following spelling features: (i) contractions, (ii) superscript letters, (iii) capitalization, and (iv) line breaks. The objective is to determine the degree of orthographic standardization in the analyzed text by taking into consideration the differences in language use between printed and privately written documents. The analysis of the data, together with a discussion of the historical context, will shed light on the standardization process in the history of the English language.

The present study is structured as follows. After this introduction, Section 2 offers background information related to the process of language standardization and medical writing. Section 3 discusses the employed methodology and provides a brief description of the source of evidence. In Section 4, the role of each analyzed spelling and punctuation feature and the degree of orthographic standardization of the text are examined. This section also presents the key findings related to the spelling and punctuation features. Finally, Section 5 concludes the paper by providing a summary of the findings and offers insights into potential future research lines.

2. Background

The process of language standardization, characterized as *“the suppression of the optional variability”* (Milroy and Milroy 8, original emphasis), affects all levels of a language, including orthography, vocabulary, grammar, syntax and pronunciation (Auer 942). The term “standard” is closely associated with canonical literature, referring to a “literary form of a language that is to be used and recognised all over the national territory” (Crowley 84). Variety is usually tolerated in spoken language, while standardization has a greater impact on written language (Milroy and Milroy 18). The standardization process also

encompasses a distinction between a standard and non-standard variety, often evaluated in terms of prestige, which also applies to spelling and punctuation, the focus of this study.

Language standardization has been the subject of various theoretical and methodological approaches across different disciplines, aiming to describe the process of standardization. Based on Haugen's fourfold stages in the development of language (110), one of the most popular models was proposed by Milroy and Milroy. This model comprises seven stages: selection of a variety that is considered to be more prestigious than others, acceptance of this variety, diffusion through the press and the educational system, maintenance, elaboration of function, codification of the norms and prescription (22). Auer states that it is reasonable to argue that, in terms of spelling, English was undergoing the codification stage by the eighteenth century, "with the subsequent stages partly overlapping with the latter stage and also covering the rest of the Late Modern English period" (940). This phase may be defined as the "reduction of variability within the selected language or variety and the establishment of norms" (Beal 90).

The efforts at reducing variation in English can be traced back to the introduction of the printing press in Great Britain in the fifteenth century. Orthoepists were involved in "the first concerted movement for the reform of the English spelling [which] gathered pace in the second half of the sixteenth century and continued into the seventeenth century" (Carney 467). In terms of orthography, researchers generally agree that English spelling had become stable by the beginning of the eighteenth century (Scragg 80).

In the process of the implementation of a standardized spelling and punctuation system, prescriptivism played a crucial role. Famous writers, such as Jonathan Swift, sought to prevent the decay of English. Thus, in his work *Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue* (1712), he argued that one of the reasons that contributed to the "maiming" (23) of the English language was that a great variety in terms of spelling was tolerated, depending on the region and the register. To prevent this, for instance, he proposed to stop clipping and curtailing words to maintain their original spelling (23).

As British society was gradually becoming more literate in the eighteenth century, normative grammars and dictionaries began to be more widely used. The latter also played a decisive role in the codification of English because speakers regarded them “as authorities” (Milroy and Milroy 22). The English writer Samuel Johnson wrote in his *Dictionary of the English Language* that he “found it necessary to distinguish those irregularities that are inherent in our tongue ... the duty of the lexicographer [is] to correct or proscribe” (A1^v). A large number of textbooks which indicated proper and improper spelling “were supplemented in the early eighteenth century by word-lists which aimed only at teaching spelling and accentuation, such as Thomas Dyché’s *A Dictionary of all the Words Commonly Us’d in the English Tongue* (1723)” and its second version *The Spelling Dictionary* (1725) (Salmon 45). However, the contribution of dictionaries in the process of standardization has been undervalued by other authors. For instance, Osselton argues that dictionaries followed the printers’ spelling practice and not the other way around (“Dr. Johnson” 308).

The question of class was also closely related to the standardization process. The eighteenth century can be regarded as a time of increased social advancement. Hickey claims that there was a growing concern of the emerging middle class about their linguistic expression (“Standards” 145). This was visible in their interest in buying books, which represented the desire to seek acceptance from the elite (“Attitudes” 8). Indeed, at the dawn of industrialization, having access to the standard patterns of a language was often associated with the notion of prestige. For example, the decline in the contracted forms *-’d* and *-d* for *-ed* toward the end of the eighteenth century was a marker of good education (Sairio 96) (see subsection 4.1.1 for more information).

It can be argued that the aforementioned assumption made by Scragg (80) that spelling by the early eighteenth century had been standardized is a broad generalization which does not take into consideration the changes in spelling practice across different types. The notion of the existence of a dual standard for spelling in the eighteenth century originates from Osselton’s comparison between Samuel Johnson’s private correspondence and his *A Dictionary of the English Language* published in 1755. Osselton contends that Samuel Johnson’s spelling was far less homogeneous in his personal correspondence than in his dictionary (“Dr. Johnson” 308, “Informal” 124). This idea of the coexistence of two spelling systems

(namely, a public system and a private one) has been confirmed by other scholars (Auer 942, Salmon 44). Nevalainen and Tiekens-Boon van Ostade claim that “by the middle of the seventeenth century [...], printing-house practice had reached a high degree of uniformity in spelling” (290). While “printers had to adhere to the standard spelling system” (942), Auer further clarifies that variation in spelling still persisted in private writings due to the greater informality tolerated in correspondence between family and friends compared to printed texts (942). This can be seen, for instance, in the common use of final *-e* in inflected verbs such as *comeing*, *haveing* and *takeing* in private letters, as pointed out by Tiekens-Boon van Ostade (41), which was not found in printed books.

Sairio provides a plausible explanation for this difference, suggesting that the “[d]ictionary presented a public standard, which was largely based on the printer’s conventions, whereas a private standard might be observed in Johnson’s epistolary spelling” (92). In her discussion, Sairio employs the term *private standard* as a concept that is, in Osselton’s words, “a graphic system which leads its own linguistic life; [...which] has its own rules and tendencies: it is independent of, though it stands in a clear relationship to, the system of spelling used by the printers” (“Informal” 125). In other words, private writing showed “a kind of variation [...with] certain degree of regularity in its own right” (Nevalainen and Tiekens-Boon van Ostade 290). Kaislaniemi et al.’s analysis of the results extracted from the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence Extension (CEECE)*, which include the binary variables single/double <l/l> and the word-medial <ei/ie> (190–203), shows their gradual elimination of variation in the eighteenth century and the development of an emerging standard in private correspondence, which took almost all the eighteenth century to be completed (205–206).

The linguistic analysis of the texts of recipe books, one of the types of medical writing, shows this divide in terms of spelling between printed and private documents. Recipe books constitute one of the six main groups of medical writing in the eighteenth century, according to Taavitsainen et al.’s classification of the materials in their corpus: “General treatises and textbooks, Texts of specific diseases, methods, therapeutic substances and midwifery, Recipe collections, Surgical and anatomical texts, Public health and Periodicals” (“Late Modern” 138). Recipe book texts share fixed generic conventions of writing and

discourse, such as the use of the imperative forms with the verb *take* in instructions (Taavitsainen et al., “Topics” 64). They were originally found in remedy books, “with traditions deriving from Old English” (Taavitsainen et al., “Sociohistorical” 23). Recipe books are of particular linguistic interest, since the eighteenth century marks the beginning of a new phase in medical communication, which is visible in the raised awareness of linguistic issues as English gradually replaced Latin as the *lingua franca* (Taavitsainen et al., “Sociohistorical” 23–24). On the one hand, institutional recipe books represented the public side of learned medicine (Lehto and Taavitsainen 280), while, on the other hand, handwritten recipe compilations illustrate how the household was a site of knowledge gathering and production (Leong 9), where medical knowledge was transmitted from generation to generation in an intimate, familiar and collaborative setting (Allen 334). Such is the case of the text under consideration in this article, which served as a valuable resource within the domestic sphere, offering guidance and medical support. Its linguistic study is useful for assessing spelling and punctuation features in private writing.

3. The Manuscript: Ms Wellcome 3731

MS Wellcome 3731 is a recipe book. It contains instructions to cure different kinds of illnesses and it was used as a source of advice and medical assistance. The medical recipes in the text follow a regular structure: (a) title of the disease or short phrase with an indication of use; (b) instructions on the preparation of a cure and list of ingredients; and, sporadically, (c) final evaluative statement, like *approved*, followed by the name of the doctor or another person. This is a feature noted in other recipes (de la Cruz Cabanillas 16). The manuscript is housed at the Wellcome Library in London and is divided into two sections: the first one deals with medical recipes (ff. 3r–43r, f. 125v), which are not listed in any particular discernible order, while the second section contains a glossary of medical terms and characters (ff. 127v–128r). Only the first section has been analyzed here. Notably, there are multiple blank folios between the penultimate recipe and the last one (ff. 43v–125r, ff. 126r–127r), suggesting a possible interruption, missing content or space left for new recipes. MS Wellcome 3731 is estimated to have been written between 1720 and 1749, as indicated in f. 2r and f. 42r.

Regarding authorship, this collection is attributed to Letitia Mytton (1690–1755), as shown in the inscription of her name on the second folio. She was married to Richard Mytton (c. 1687–1731), of Halston, Shropshire (Leong and Pennell 152). Letitia Mytton compiled medical recipes from several friends and doctors, as exemplified in the inscription in f. 42r: “25 July 1749 Doctor Nichols gave me this Receipt when I was very Ill and weak – London.” The possibility that Letitia Mytton had received a recipe from Frank Nicholls (1699–1788), a reader of anatomy at Oxford University, suggests that she belonged to the upper middle class. Little information is available about the remaining recipes, which were likely shared among family members, friends and neighbors. Consequently, it remains unclear whether Letitia Mytton was the author of these medical recipes or simply a copyist.

The present work is based on the transcription of MS Wellcome 3731, a hitherto unedited manuscript. As for transcription conventions, all superscript letters have been lowered to the line and abbreviated letters have been expanded in italics. Contractions of past participles and past tenses have been retained so as to reproduce the original spelling practice. Ampersands have been replaced by *and*. In addition, original word division, capitalization and punctuation reproduce the source text as faithfully as possible. The original lineation and pagination have also been preserved. Approximately 7,700 words have been transcribed altogether in a text transcription (it has not been encoded in XML format). The transcription has been carried out based on the digitized images provided by the Wellcome Library.

The analysis of the spelling and punctuation features of MS Wellcome 3731, which is representative of the medical tradition in the household in the early eighteenth century, may become a source of interest for those interested in exploring the differences between private and printed medical texts (see, for example, Tyrkkö 67–93), and for picturing the general scene of spelling standardization.

4. Spelling and Punctuation Variation in Ms Wellcome 3731

This section presents the analysis of the spelling and punctuation used in the text of the manuscript by taking into consideration abbreviations (more specifically, contractions and superscript letters),

capitalization and line breaks. Recent research has approached these spelling features from a number of angles, often employing epistolary communication as the main source of data. For example, the use of contractions (Sairio 93–106) and capitalization have been previously examined from a diachronic perspective (Osselton, “Informal” 123–137, “Spelling-Book” 49–61). Regarding medical writing, much of the current literature has focused on Early Modern English handwritten texts, some of these works dealing with the evolution and the regularization of abbreviations (Calle-Martín, “Corpus” 114–130) and line breaks and hyphenation (Alonso-Almeida and Ortega-Barrera 146–168; Criado-Peña, “Orthographic” 13–14). All the findings of this and other relevant literature are contrasted with the results of the analysis of MS Wellcome 3731 in the following subsections. However, to date, and to the best of my knowledge, the study of the spelling features in private writing in the Late Modern English period, and more specifically, in recipe books, remains unexplored. The findings in this present paper seek to obtain data which will help to address this research gap.

4.1. Abbreviations

A word or phrase can be shortened with the use of an abbreviation. In the history of English, different types of abbreviations have been employed to “save time and space” (Petti 22) in writing. In the register of medicine, “most recipes [were] concise in form, making frequent use of various conventionalized abbreviations and contracted forms that at least the professional readers of the texts can be assumed to have shared” (Pahta 128). In Calle-Martín’s quantitative-led diachronic research, the data show the general decline in the use of abbreviations in recipes written from 1500 to 1700 (“Corpus” 123). The subsequent subsections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 provide further context on the use and development of the abbreviations studied in the eighteenth century.

Clemens and Graham’s classification, which is followed for this study, divides abbreviations into three main groups: *suspensions*, *contractions* and *symbols* (89). As these authors indicate, “in suspensions, one or more letters are omitted at the end of a word” (89), whereas “in contractions, the abbreviation includes, at least, the first and the last letter(s) of the word” (89). Symbols include *brevigraphs*, which “might resemble one of

the omitted letters or be apparently arbitrary in shape” (Petti 23), and *superior letters*. The latter are also referred to as superscript letters. Their presence indicates “that the letters preceding them had been omitted” (Petti 24). This article deals with contractions and superscript letters, two types of abbreviations listed by Clemens and Grahams. There are no suspensions recorded in the text studied (ff. 3r–43r, f. 125v). Although there are instances of brevigraphs, no definitive conclusions can be reached at the level of standardization as there is little evidence regarding the general practice of this spelling feature in medical texts from the eighteenth century.

4.1.1. Contractions

The first decade of the 1700s witnessed the widespread acceptance of contractions and confirmed the earlier “development of the late seventeenth century” (Haugland 172). A campaign led by Addison’s and Swift’s grammars and spelling books in the 1710s triggered a gradual decline in the use of contractions (Haugland 172), which persisted in some writings until the end of the eighteenth century, partially because its acceptability depended on genre (Haugland 176, 180). The contractions discussed in this subsection are *-’d* and *-d* in past participles and past tenses in weak verbs and those of the neuter pronoun *it* and the verb *be* (*it’s* and *’tis*).

In the eighteenth century, the different variants of inflectional endings of past participles and past tenses in weak verbs were: “the emerging standard *-ed*, the *-’d* variant commonly used by early printers, *-d* of more private spelling styles, and the more uncommon *-t* and *-t* variants” (Sairio 95, original emphasis). The apostrophe was not a standard form, so it was not always considered necessary to employ a punctuation mark to indicate the contraction (Petti 22). Osselton’s comparison of the use of the apostrophe between epistolary writing and printed documents shows that, even though there is a time lag between these two types of documents, there is a general correlation in the “clear pattern of the rise and fall of the apostrophe in these verb forms” from 1600 to 1800 (“Informal” 134). According to Oldireva-Gustafsson’s study across different written genres, by the 1800s the dominance of the *-ed* variant was evident (94).

In MS Wellcome 3731, there are 64 occurrences of the variants *-’d* and *-d* of past participles and past tenses of weak verbs, whereas there are no recorded instances of *-t* or *-t* endings. Fragments of this variation extracted from the text are listed below (examples 1–2):

(1) “Take a pound of Hipps, clean from the Seeds, then put them in a Mortar, with a pound of double **refin’d** Sugar, bruising them till they goe to a conserve”. (f. 15v, emphasis added)

(2) “**rub’d** with butter till they be cold *and yen* let yem be **opend** and **Stretch’d** out Smooth” (f. 4v, emphasis added).

Table 1 presents the distribution of all *-ed* forms in the text of the manuscript.

| | <i>-ed</i> | <i>-’d</i> | <i>-d</i> | Total |
|-------------|------------|------------|-----------|-------|
| Occurrences | 48 | 58 | 6 | 112 |
| (raw and %) | (43%) | (52%) | (5%) | |

TABLE 1. *-ed* forms in MS Wellcome 3731

A preliminary interpretation that can be obtained from this data is that the use of the *-d* ending in MS Wellcome 3731 is marginal and that the past participle and preterit are mainly rendered through either the apostrophized or the expanded variant. Although the number of instances of the full form *-ed* and the contracted form *-’d* are similar, a more detailed analysis of the different uses of these contractions is needed. Otherwise, no observable patterns would allow us to discern why the *-ed* forms of past participles and preterits appear expanded in some instances and contracted in others. Table 2 below presents the *-ed* forms classified by function.

This data suggests that, in almost all cases, the contracted forms *-’d* and *-d* are only used with the past participle. This pattern had previously been recorded by Criado-Peña in her analysis of this spelling feature (“Elizabeth” 189). Further research reveals that there are 9 verbs which appear both contracted and expanded, as listed below in Table 3.

| | Occurrences (raw and %) | | Occurrences (raw and %) |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>-ed</i> past participle | 45 (94%) | <i>-ed</i> preterit | 3 (4%) |
| <i>-'d</i> past participle | 57 (98%) | <i>-'d</i> preterit | 1 (2%) |
| <i>-d</i> past participle | 6 (100%) | <i>-d</i> preterit | 0 |

TABLE 2. *-ed* forms in MS Wellcome 3731 sorted by function

| Base form of the verb | Occurrences (raw and %) | | | Total |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------|-----------|-------|
| | <i>-ed</i> | <i>-'d</i> | <i>-d</i> | |
| <i>approve</i> | 2 (40%) | 3 (60%) | 0 | 5 |
| <i>powder</i> | 3 (60%) | 2 (40%) | 0 | 5 |
| <i>bruise</i> | 1 (25%) | 3 (75%) | 0 | 4 |
| <i>stone</i> | 1 (50%) | 1 (50%) | 0 | 2 |
| <i>swallow</i> | 1 (50%) | 1 (50%) | 0 | 2 |
| <i>prepare</i> | 3 (75%) | 1 (25%) | 0 | 4 |
| <i>dissolve</i> | 1 (50%) | 1 (50%) | 0 | 2 |

| | Occurrences (raw and %) | | | Total |
|--------------|-------------------------|-------|---|-------|
| <i>slice</i> | 4 | 2 | 0 | 6 |
| | (67%) | (33%) | | |
| <i>prove</i> | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| | (50%) | (50%) | | |

TABLE 3. Verbs showing variation of *-ed* forms in MS Wellcome 3731

These findings provide new evidence that contributes to the existing research, highlighting that the process of spelling normalization in the private side of medical writing was not fully accomplished by 1749.

Another interesting aspect which deserves special attention is the contraction made up of the neuter pronoun *it* followed by the verb *be*. Peitsara's study of the evolution of the variants *'tis* and *it's* demonstrates that the former is older than the latter, since *'tis* was first employed in drama in the fifteenth century, whereas the first appearance of *it's* is recorded in the seventeenth century (80). Based on her analysis of the *Helsinki Corpus*, Peitsara claims that *'tis* was far more popular than *it's* from 1640 to 1710 (81). In Thomas Dyche's *Guide to the English Tongue* (1707), the English lexicographer preferred the form *'tis* over *it's* (Haugland 172). In MS Wellcome 3731, there does not seem to be any predilection for either of these two forms. There are 3 occurrences of *'tis* (60%) versus 2 of *it's* (40%).

4.1.2. Superscript letters

Superscript letters were placed above the line of writing. The raised letters, which showed that one or more preceding letters were omitted, were commonly used in the Middle and Early Modern English periods. Initially, in the sixteenth century, superscript letters were still found in printed books (Edwards 65). However, by the eighteenth century, they were associated with greater informality and were gradually less employed in printed texts (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 125).

There are 564 superscript letters in MS Wellcome 3731. The normalized frequency of this type of abbreviation per 1,000 words is

73.25. All of them are found in final position, although sometimes, as Petti points out, some could also appear “in the middle of a word (e.g., *wthout* for *without*)” (24, original emphasis). The use of the superior letters is not consistent and depends on the scribe’s practice. However, some tendencies can be charted. The vast majority of the superscript letters are found in the abbreviations y^n , y^e , y^m , y^t , y^u and y^r , which stand for *than* or *then*, *the*, *them*, *that*, *you* and *your*, respectively. They represent 94% of the total number of instances (531 occurrences). The first four words mentioned above are rendered with the modern form <th> elsewhere in the text. The difference in distribution between these two spelling practices, illustrated in Tables 4 and 5 below, shows that there is a slight preference for the use of expanded forms for most of the words aforementioned except for *the*.

| Superscript letters as parts of abbreviations | Occurrences (raw and %) | Expanded forms | Occurrences (raw and %) | Total |
|---|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------|
| y^n | 0 | <i>than</i> | 1 (100%) | 1 |
| y^n | 31 (41%) | <i>then</i> | 44 (59%) | 75 |
| y^e | 174 (60 %) | <i>the</i> | 118 (40%) | 292 |
| y^m | 28 (43%) | <i>them</i> | 37 (57%) | 65 |
| y^t | 12 (41%) | <i>that</i> | 17 (59%) | 29 |
| y^u | 7 (15%) | <i>you</i> | 40 (85%) | 47 |
| y^r | 6 (27%) | <i>your</i> | 16 (73%) | 22 |

TABLE 4. Distribution of <y> followed by a superscript letter vs. expanded forms in MS Wellcome 3731

| | Superscript letters as parts of abbreviations | Expanded forms | Total |
|-------------------------|---|----------------|-------|
| Occurrences (raw and %) | 258 | 273 | 531 |
| | (49%) | (51%) | |

TABLE 5. Total number of occurrences of <y> followed by a superscript letter vs. expanded forms in MS Wellcome 3731

The remaining 33 superscript letters (6% of the total) are English honorifics. *Mistress* and *Mister* always appear in their contracted forms M^{rs} (9×) and M^r (2×). There are no instances of M^{ss} . The full form *Doctor* (6×) is also written elsewhere in the text with the shortened forms D^r (1×) and Doc^r (2×). Additionally, this spelling practice is applied to prepositions and relative pronouns, as exemplified by the use of w^{th} (17×) and w^{ch} (2×), respectively (Figures 1 and 2). However, the expanded forms *with* (42×) and *which* (5×) are more frequent.

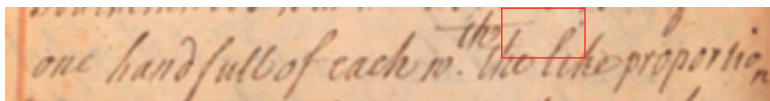


FIGURE 1. 'with'

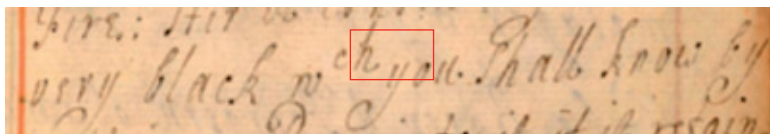


FIGURE 2. 'which'

4.2. Capitalization

Capitalization patterns have undergone substantial modification over the centuries. One of the first spelling reformers who addressed this

issue was John Hart in 1551 in his work *The Opening of the Unreasonable Writing of Our English Toung*, where he advised English speakers to capitalize the first letter of the first word “at the beginning of a sentence, proper name, and an important common noun” (Crystal 69). The history of capitalization in English in the following centuries is discussed by Crystal (69, original emphasis):

By the early 17th century, the practice had extended to titles (*Sir, Lady*), forms of address (*Father, Mistris*), and personified nouns (*Nature*) [...] By the beginning of the 18th century, the influence of Continental books had caused this practice to be extended still further (e.g. to the names of the branches of knowledge), and it was not long before some writers began using a capital for any noun that they felt to be important [...] perhaps for aesthetic reasons, or perhaps because printers were uncertain about which nouns to capitalize, and so capitalized them all.

Osselton’s quantitative analysis of capitalization between 1500 and 1800 confirms its widespread usage in the early eighteenth century. However, data from the 1770s reveal a decline in the percentage of nouns with an initial upper case that would not be capitalized today (“Spelling-Book” 50). The excessive use of capital letters during this time began to face criticism. The English lexicographer Thomas Dyche voiced his disapproval in the following terms: “it is unnecessary, and hinders that remarkable distinction intended by a capital” (*A Guide* 103 [1729]). The frequent spelling practice of capitalizing all nouns which bore “considerable stress of the authors [...] to make them more conspicuous and remarkable,” was considered “ornamental” (*A Guide* 103 [1729]). He provided a list of words that should be written with a capital letter at the beginning (*A Guide* 3–74 [1729]) and some recommendations, such as writing the first word of books, proper names, and the interjection *O* and the pronoun *I* with a capital letter, among others (*A Guide* 104 [1729]).

The text under study was written when the trend of capitalizing all words reached its peak. Almost all content words (nouns, main verbs, adjectives and adverbs) tend to be capitalized in MS Wellcome 3731. Based on an analysis of the capitalization patterns used by Letitia Mytton, it seems reasonable to suggest that she used capital letters for words that she considered relevant or important in the field of science.

For instance, key terms related to medicine and health are always capitalized, such as the names of illnesses like *Imposhtumes*, *Botches* and *Plague*, and names of herbs and plants like *Egrimony*, *Mugwort* and *Caraway Seeds*. In addition, capital letters are also used for quantities (e.g., *Ounce*), which are important elements in homemade recipes. Additionally, numerals always appear with initial capitals (e.g., *Six*, *Seven*), as well as titles of address and occupational titles (e.g., *Physick*, *Doctor*, *Mistress Surgeon*). Sometimes, it seems that there are no clear and observable patterns in the text, as illustrated below (examples 3–4). Boldface is used for highlighting the difference in spelling regarding capitalization:

(3) “**T**ake half a pound of **R**ed **L**ead **S**earced very fine, put it into a pint of **O**live **O**yle boyle *yem* together on a **S**low **F**ire: **S**tir it continually till it’s very black wen you **S**hall know by dipping a **R**ag into it”. (f. 4r, emphasis added)

(4) “**M**istress **H**enson **R**eceipt for the **J**aundice **T**ake a pint of hempseed, take 2 spoonfull of it and bruse it and boile it in a pint of **M**ilk till it comes to half a pint and drink it every **M**orning till the hempseed is done”. (f. 12r, emphasis added)

4.3. Line breaks

In MS Wellcome 3731, there are 34 instances of line-final word division rendered in three ways. The first two are represented with a hyphen, which began to be used in English from the thirteenth century until the end of the seventeenth century mainly to indicate line breaks (Petti 26-27). In the eighteenth century, Dyche described this function in the following way: “being set at the end of the line, [the hyphen] denotes that the syllables of a word are parted, and that the remainder of it is at the beginning of the next line” (*A Guide* 107 [1729]). In Alonso-Almeida and Ortega-Barrera’s (164) description of the punctuation system of John de Feckenham’s sixteenth-century medical recipes “*Booke of soueraigne medicines*,” the authors indicate that this hyphen was also doubled to show word division at the end of the line (164). This equal sign continued to be used in the eighteenth century (McDermott

13) and, in the text under study, this general practice is often followed, as 10 line breaks are marked in this way (29%). An example is illustrated in the line-final division of *morning* (Figure 3).

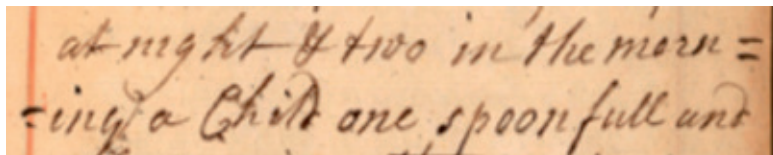


FIGURE 3. Representation of a line break with a double hyphen at the end of the line and at the beginning of the following line for *morning*

In line-final word division, the double hyphen can be witnessed both at the end of the line and at the beginning of the following one (4×), as in Figure 3, only at the end of the first line (2×), or at the beginning of the second line (4×). The latter case is clearly noticeable in the rendering of the word *turpentine* in Figure 4.

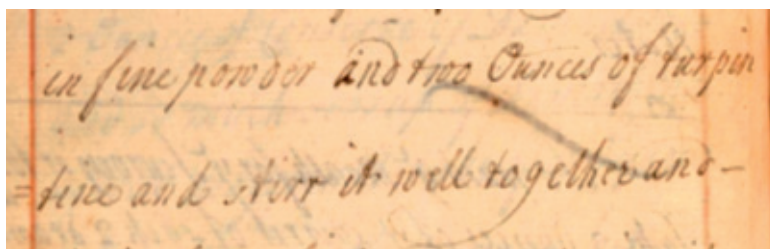


FIGURE 4. Representation of a line break with a double hyphen at the beginning of the second line for *turpentine*

In addition, line breaks are also marked with a single hyphen on 23 occasions (68%). They appear at both lines (9×), at the end of the first line (7×), or at the beginning of the second (7×), as illustrated in the word *spoonfull* in Figure 5.

The hyphen is omitted in one instance (3%), as shown in the line break for *Occasion* in Figure 6.

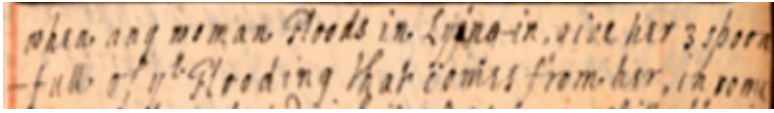


FIGURE 5. Representation of a line break with a single hyphen at the beginning of the second line for *spoonfull*

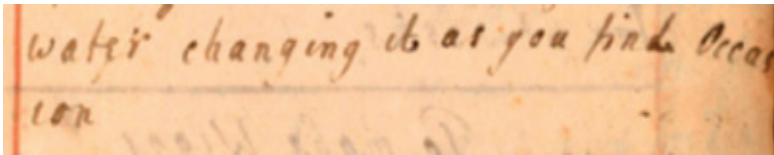


FIGURE 6. Representation of a line break without hyphens for *Occasion*

With regard to the general context of the practice of line-final word division, Calle-Martín concludes that “we have to wait until the late modern period to observe a more conventional pattern of word-division usage in English” (“Line-Final” 50). In Criado-Peña’s case study, where she assesses the level of orthographic standardization of London, Wellcome Library, MS 3009, a recipe book written in the second half of the seventeenth century, she demonstrates that “there was no regular pattern” (“Orthographic” 14) in line-final word division.

Following Hladký’s analysis of word division in English, we can distinguish two principles or dimensions in terms of line-final word division, namely, morphemic and phonological (73–82). Phonologically, words can be divided at the end of a line between two consonants (the C–C rule), e.g., *ton-gue*, between two vowels (the V–V rule), e.g., *dre-am*, and at the end of an open syllable (CV–CV rule), e.g., *ori-ginal* (73). Calle-Martín expands upon this classification with the inclusion of two new division rules. Specifically, he examines the division between the pair *-st* (ST rule), e.g., *cas-te*, and the division between the pair *-ct* (CT rule), e.g., *confec-te* (“Line-Final” 45). As far as phonological breaks are concerned, the CV–CV rule can be observed in the text under scrutiny in 6 instances (18%), e.g., *cammo-mile*, the C–C rule in 21 occurrences (62%), e.g., *quan-tity*, and the V–V in one instance (3%), i.e., *eno-ugh*. There are no ST or CT rules in the text. These scenarios do occur (i.e.,

there are words which contain these consonant clusters), but there are no line breaks of these types. Other word division practices (i.e., those which do not follow any of the rules aforementioned) signal morphological division with a suffix and are attested in 6 instances (28%), e.g., *occas-ion*.

5. Conclusions

The main objective of this article was to study the variability in the use of several spelling features, including contractions, superscript letters, capitalization and line breaks in MS Wellcome 3731, an eighteenth-century medical text employed in the private sphere. Several conclusions have been reached.

When it comes to contractions, the existence of a three-fold representation of inflectional endings of the past participles and past tenses in weak verbs shows that the process of spelling regularization was still developing. The *-'d* variant, which is in the majority of the cases the contraction of the past participle, is the preferred form as opposed to the *-ed* and *-d* forms. As for the contraction of *it* and *be*, the use of *it's* does not predominate over the use of *'tis*, which proves that there was not a standardized practice in this regard. Concerning superior letters, the analysis suggests that the process of standardization had not reached a completion stage. Most noticeably, there is still a slight preference for the use of the superscript <e> preceded by the form <y> instead of <th> in the rendering of *the*. The capitalization system is perhaps a more interesting indicator that proves that there is not a high degree of standardization in the text. Even though some patterns can be observed, as in the use of capital letters for nouns, in other particular cases there does not seem to be any rule. Line-final breaks had not been regularized yet, even though the majority of occurrences follow the C-C rule.

Overall, this article provides insights into the spelling and punctuation practice of medical writing in the domestic realm and, more specifically, of an English recipe book from the eighteenth century. The findings demonstrate that there was not a full degree of spelling and punctuation uniformity in the text studied. This suggests that the process of standardization was still in progress in private medical writing. Further research needs to be done to provide a fuller

picture of this issue. A natural progression of this work is to analyze other spelling features in Late Modern English medical texts from a diachronic perspective which may show further evidence of variability in spelling, such as the distribution of graphemes <i> and <y> and consonant doubling. The study of these features may shed further light on the level of orthographic standardization in Late Modern English.

Notes

¹ The Late Modern English period here is understood as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as indicated by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (viii).

² It is interesting to understand the motives that lie behind the production of this proposal. In the 1700s, for Swift and other writers like Shaftesbury, Addison and Steele, the notion of “a fixed, prestigious standard language” was a “chimera” (Watts 172). Hence, corruption of the language had to be avoided.

³ There is another manuscript (MS 3730) written by the same person.

⁴ I am currently preparing a semi-diplomatic edition of the text for my doctoral dissertation.

⁵ Other taxonomies have been proposed to classify the types of abbreviations. For instance, Petti’s terminology includes brevigraphs (special signs), contractions, curtailments (or suspensions), superior (or superscript letters), elisions, special signs and sigils (22–25). Honkaphja’s categorization divides them into suspensions (alternative names: truncations, curtailment), contractions, sigils, abbreviations by signs of abbreviation, including brevigraphs, superscript letters, abbreviations by special signs, elision and other categories (pars. 9–39). For the sake of clarity and consistency, this article follows the classification provided by Clemens and Grahams (89). Petti’s definitions have been referenced in the article whenever they coincide with Clemens and Graham’s.

⁶ Petti’s description of contractions is different, since he considers that they “consisted in the omission of one or more letters from the middle of a word” (22).

⁷ The only type of brevigraph found in the text of the manuscript is the ampersand. The comparison between the number of occurrences of & (212 instances, 78%) and the full form *and* (59 instances, 22%) shows the dominance of the former form over the latter. Except for Sairio’s

study, where the author noted that this abbreviation dominated epistolary writing (103), as far as I am aware, no other piece of research gives any indication of the standard in the eighteenth century in this regard.

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