

TranscribeEstoria | Training materials

transcribeestoria.bham.ac.uk

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MODULE 2

TranscribeEstoria: first steps

Similarities and differences between manuscripts

Scribal changes

- Crossed out letters or words

- Added letters or words

- Digital exhibition “The Discovery of the Past”

- The digital edition of the *Estoria de España*

The TranscribeEstoria digital platform

Transcription and automatic collation

The drop-down menus: basic tagging

- Rubrics

- initial decorated letters

- Line breaks

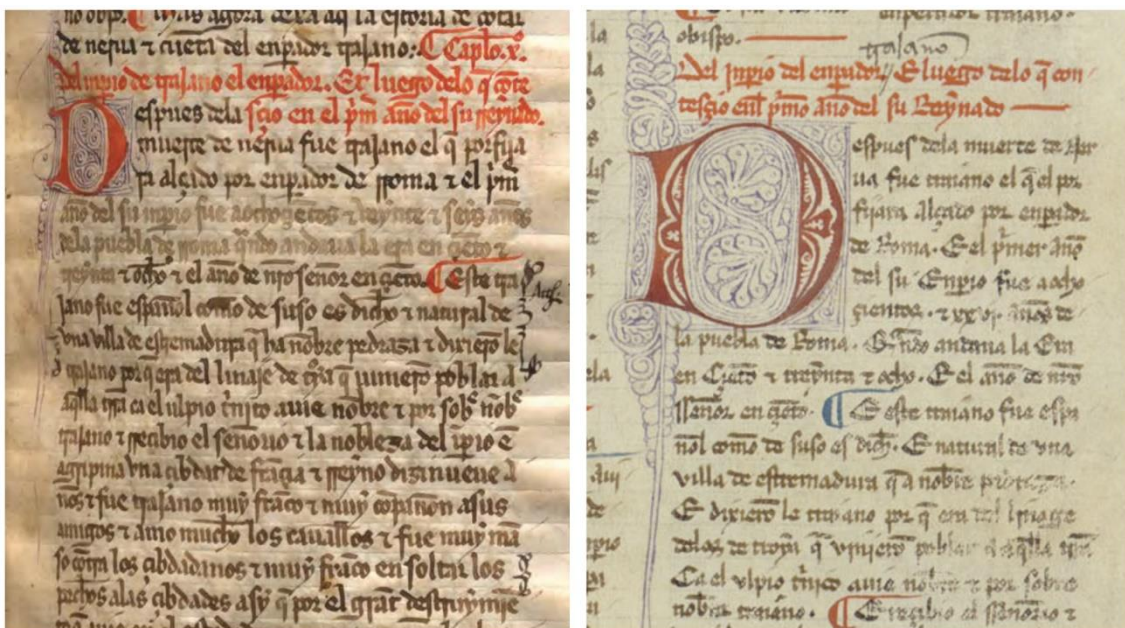
- Pilcrows

- Column breaks

A lovely manicule

Similarities and differences between manuscripts

Here at Transcribe Estoria what we want to do is to be able to look at the similarities and differences between the at least 40 manuscripts that scholars consider to be the *Estoria de Espanna*. This was first written in the scriptorium of Alfonso X el Sabio, but **it was copied out many times** in the following years, decades and centuries. Each time the text was copied by hand by scribes, and each manuscript is slightly, or significantly, different from the others for several reasons. Here you can see a fragment from the chapter that we are going to discuss in this video ('On the empire of Trajan') copied in **two different witnesses**: on the left the manuscript that we are going to transcribe, and on the right another copy, this one from the mid fourteenth century (BNE, Ms. 5795). Notice, for example, the differences in the column width, the size of the writing and the dimensions of the initial D.



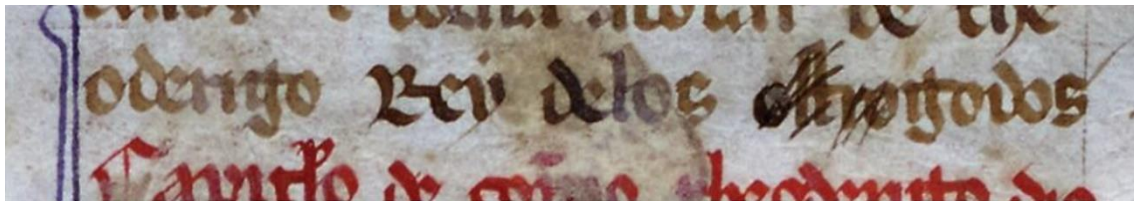
Scribal changes

As we all know, when copying something by hand it can be very easy to make mistakes. We might make spelling errors, momentarily lose concentration and skip a bit, a whole line or more, or even write something twice, and if we notice, we may choose to change what we have written - perhaps with a crossing out. **Medieval scribes also made changes** to their work from time to time. These are called scribal changes. At Transcribe Estoria we don't call them 'scribal errors' because this is us as modern readers making a judgement - that it is an error. In fact, at this stage of transcription it is often too early to say for sure if they are errors - some are, some may not be. What we do know is that they are instances where the scribe has made a change. In manuscripts, where there are errors, some are corrected by the scribe, some are pointed out by later readers of the manuscript, and some remain uncorrected to this day.

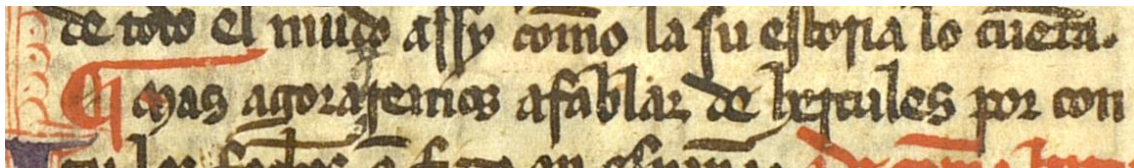
Let's look at a few examples. In this first image (BMP Ms. 550) you can see that the word **libro**, which should not appear, is crossed out in red, and underdotted to indicate that this is an error.



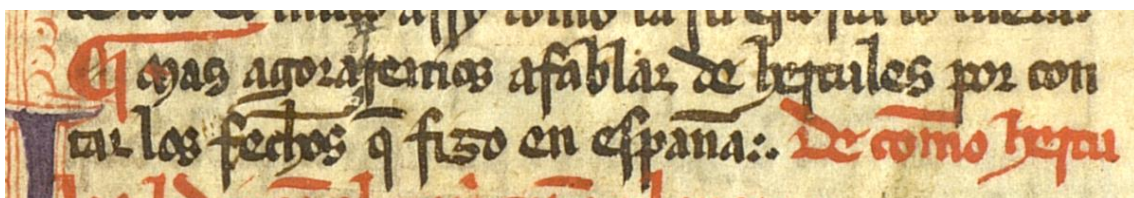
Something similar occurs in this image (BMP Ms. 550). The word **ostregodos** is corrected to **godos**, by crossing out the first part of the word - 'ostro'.



Finally, in this third image (BNE Ms. 12837) you can read "Mas agora **remos** a fablar de hercules" - above 'remos', someone has added the syllable **que**, which appears abbreviated, to change the text to say "**agora queremos**".

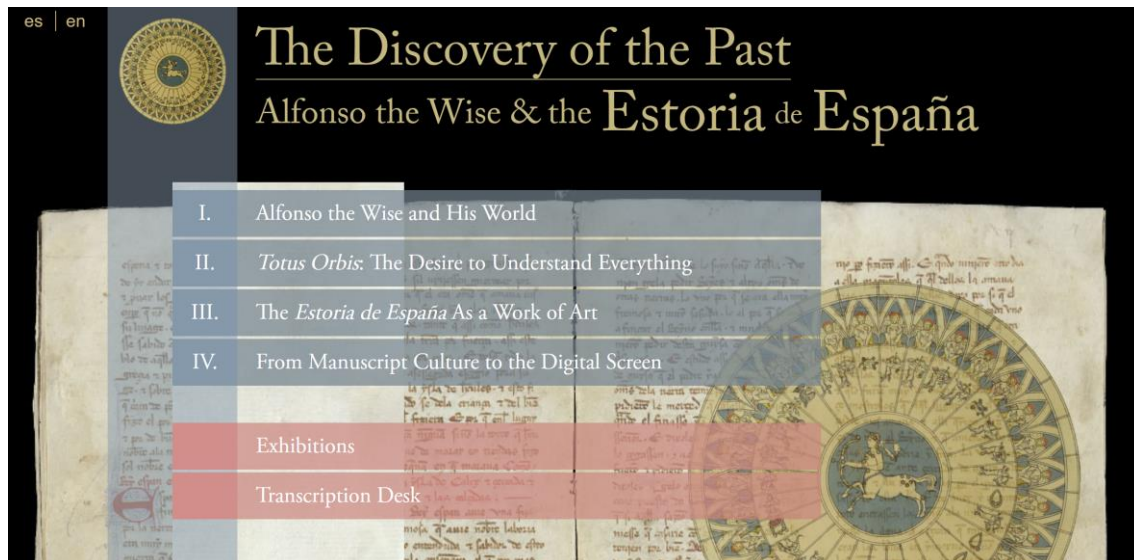


Another reason for differences between manuscripts is that Castilian spelling was changing a lot during the centuries that the *Estoria de Espanna* was being written, **re-written, read and copied**, and when we transcribe the text of each manuscript exactly as it appears in the images we have of them, we can use the transcriptions to help us learn about how the language was evolving over time. For example, look again at this section from our manuscript - if we expand the abbreviations we can read: "Mas agora queremos a fablar de hercules por contar los fechos que fizo en espanna". It's not a million miles from modern Spanish, but there are some spelling changes. Which ones do you detect?



On other occasions, differences between witnesses are not purely graphic or linguistic, but rather are **formal changes**, chronological retouches, the abbreviation or expansion of certain passages, or changes in the location of chapters or whole narrative blocks. Other differences between witnesses may be due to ideology or

politics, as happens, for example, in King Sancho IV's version of the *Estoria de Espanna*, which has a clear pro-monarchic tendency. We invite you to visit our digital exhibition 'The Discovery of the Past. Alfonso the Wise and the Estoria de España. (dhi.ac.uk/estoria/), where you will be able to see some examples of this point. One of the ways that scholars are able to work out which manuscript is related to which, which was copied from which, is by comparing and analysing the textual differences between the manuscripts.



We have already transcribed a number of Estoria de Espanna manuscripts, which are available to view at the website of our 2016 edition (blog.bham.ac.uk/estoria-digital/), and now we want to add this manuscript to our database. This is why, for our project, it is really important that you transcribe exactly what you see in the image.

Estoria de Espanna Digital



Home

This is the official website of the AHRC funded project "An electronic research environment and edition of the Estoria de Espanna of Alfonso X, King of Castile and Leon" (the Estoria de Espanna), which was granted funding to carry out transcriptions of five complete manuscripts and to develop principles that will allow the crowdsourcing of other witnesses.

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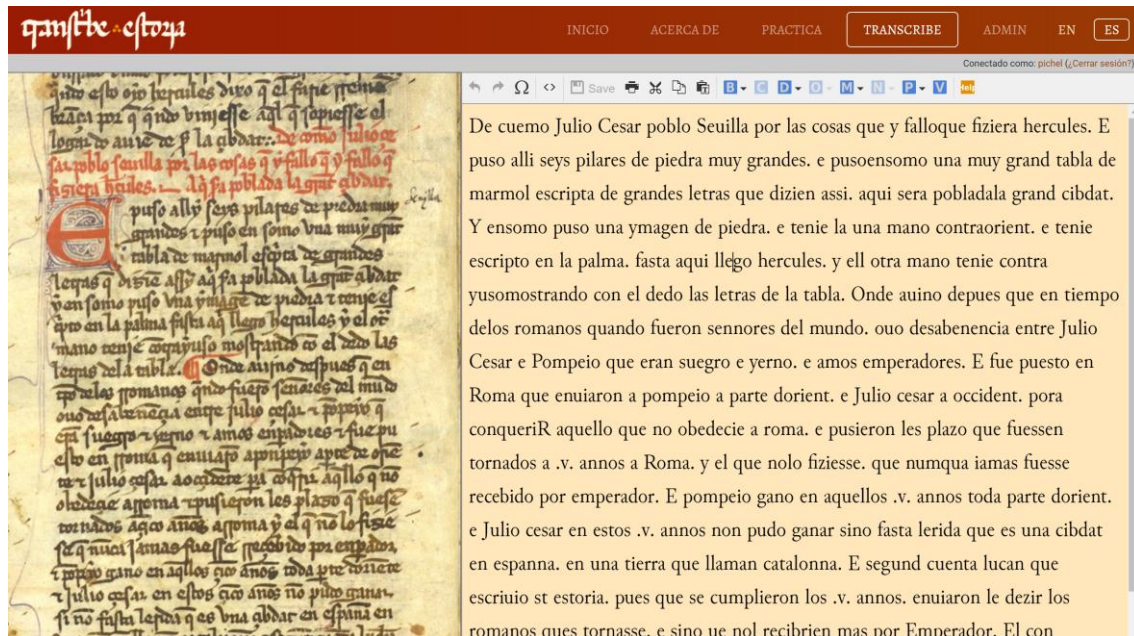
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The Transcribe Estoria digital platform

The existing text on the right hand side of the transcription platform is the transcription for the manuscript we call **E1**. This is an Alfonsine manuscript, which means that scholars know it came directly from the scriptorium, or workshop, of King Alfonso X. Scholars have dated the composition of this codex to the early 1270s. We call this Alfonsine version the **base text**, because we use it as the 'norm', or the textual model, so that we can see where other manuscripts are different from it.

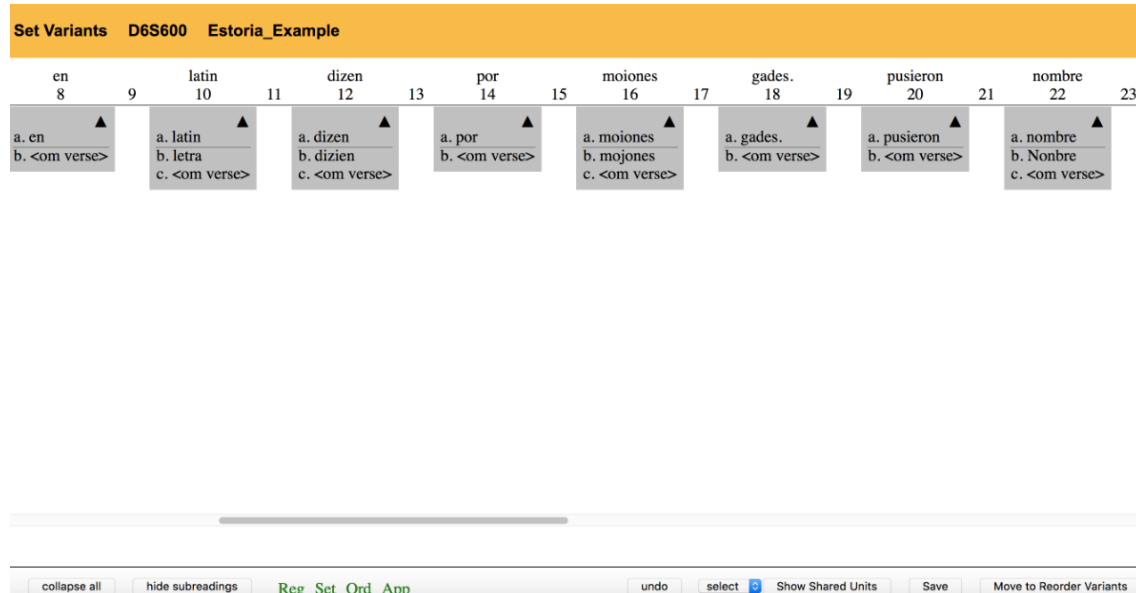


The manuscript in the images on the left hand side is known by the sigla **C**, following textual tradition. It is manuscript **12837** from the National Library of Spain, the Biblioteca Nacional de España. It is a copy of E1, made in the first decades of the 14th century, around 45-60 years after E1 was first produced. Our objective is to **modify the transcription of the base text of E1** so that it matches exactly what appears in manuscript C.

Transcription and automatic collation

The new transcription requires **a high level of detail**, so, for example, we want to know the exact spelling in C and the disposition of the manuscript: for example, where there are spaces between words or where what we now think of as two words are written without a space between, where there are abbreviations, where mistakes have been altered and what the original and the alteration are, where there is physical damage to the manuscript which inhibits reading, if there is an illuminated letter and how many lines high it is, and where there are rubrics as chapter headings, and pilcrows to break up the text. Despite this level of detail, however, we do not want to study the variant shapes of the same letter, so for example, we transcribe long <s> (similar to <f>) and short <s> as 's', and we transcribe long <r> and short <r> as 'r'.

At a later stage of the project, a computer programme will be able to match up corresponding sections in E1, C and the other manuscripts and will carry out **an automatic collation**. We will be able to see the similarities and differences between the manuscripts, such as palaeographic, linguistic or ideological differences, and we will be able to make judgements about why these changes came about. Here you can see how we use the computer software to automatically group corresponding sections of the transcribed text from several manuscripts.



This final phase of the comparison will only be successful if the transcriptions themselves are **accurate**, so your job here is very important - in fact the accuracy of our results when we compare the manuscripts and analyse the differences depends on the rigour and accuracy of your transcriptions. The transcription and revision work you carry out here will have a direct effect on our ability to collate and compare the manuscripts accurately. You will be making **a genuine and valued contribution** to the scholarship of this important manuscript.

The drop-down menus: basic tagging

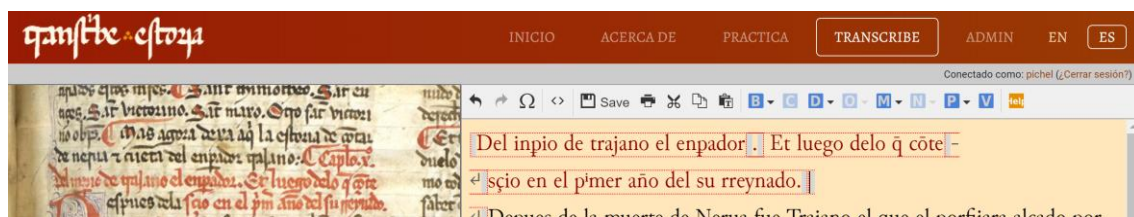
Before starting to compare the text and the image, and to transcribe, it is first necessary to familiarise yourself with the top drop-down menus. Here you will find various buttons that allow you to mark different graphic and decorative particularities. The options that you are going to use most are these: the **abbreviation** menu (u) the **ornamentation** (O), **marginalia** or marginal notes (M) and **punctuation** (P). Other things in the text that you need to mark, such as the exact spelling or the line breaks are done directly in the transcription text, without a menu, using just the keyboard or your computer.



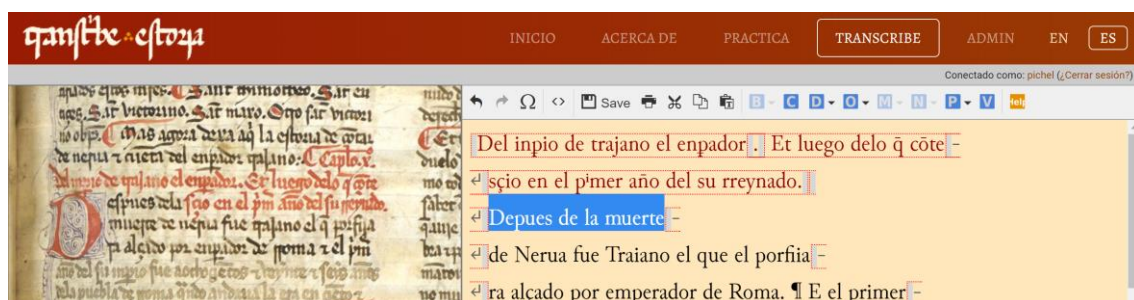
Rubrics

The very first task when preparing to transcribe is marking the transcription to show where there are rubrics, which are like the **title of a chapter**, and usually appear in red. Then we move onto telling the transcription platform where there are line breaks in the manuscript in the image, so where the text of one line finishes and another starts. Using our transcription platform these two tasks are pretty easy. Let's see it in action.

In this example, you can see that the first line of the transcription reads “Del inperio de trajano el enperador. Et luego delo que contescio en el primer anno del su rreynado”. In the manuscript image this text appears in red, directly after the chapter number (Capitulo xº, ‘Chapter 10’). This means that this is a rubric. We want to tell the transcription platform that this text appears in red, so I highlight all the text that appears in red, choose the button ‘**ornamentation**’, with the sign ‘O’. Within this drop-down menu I choose ‘**highlighted text**’ and ‘**rubrication**’. Once I have done this, this text in the transcription now appears in red, just as it does in the image.

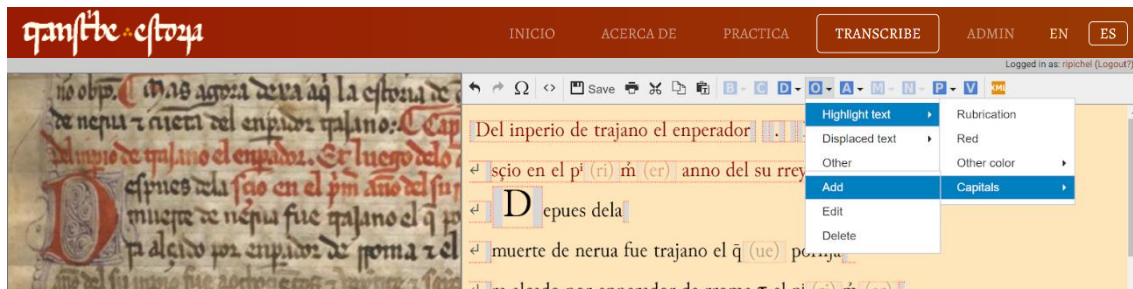


You will have noticed that in the manuscript the last part of the rubric shares a line with the first line of main body text, “Despues dela”, in black. In editing we call this a ‘**split rubric**’, but this is not anything we need to worry about right now. Just bear in mind that **you should only mark as a rubric the text that appears in red** in the image, not the part of the main body text that appears in black. For now we will put this “Despues dela” on a new line, as shown here:



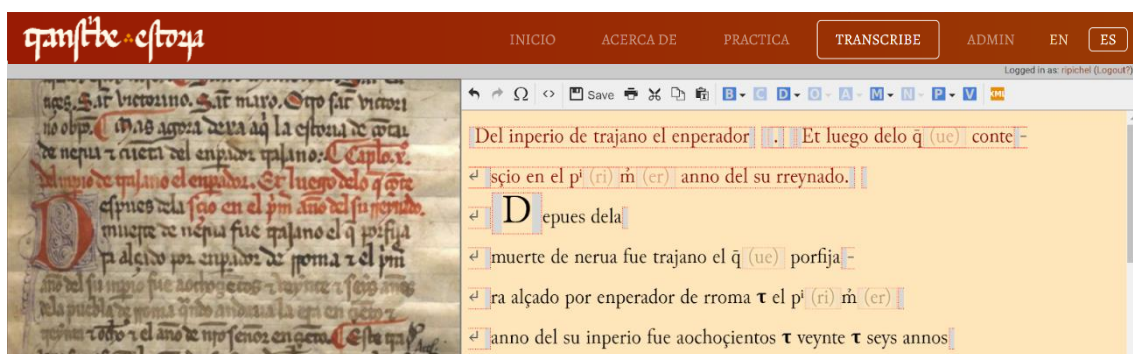
Initial decorated letters

Let's look more closely at "Despues dela" for a moment. You can see that the first word of this chapter, despues, starts with a **capital letter** D in red, and decorated with blue ink. We are interested in the presence of the initial decorated letter, which always come at the start of a chapter. We are also interested in the height of the capital - the number of lines it spans vertically - this is normally three or four. We want to mark these features. For this, you need to highlight the capital letter - in this case a D, and click on the drop-down **ornamentation menu**, under the letter O. You need to select **highlight text**, **capitals** and **add**. A box will then appear, where you need to put how many lines high the capital is - in this case three, and then click on insert.



Line breaks

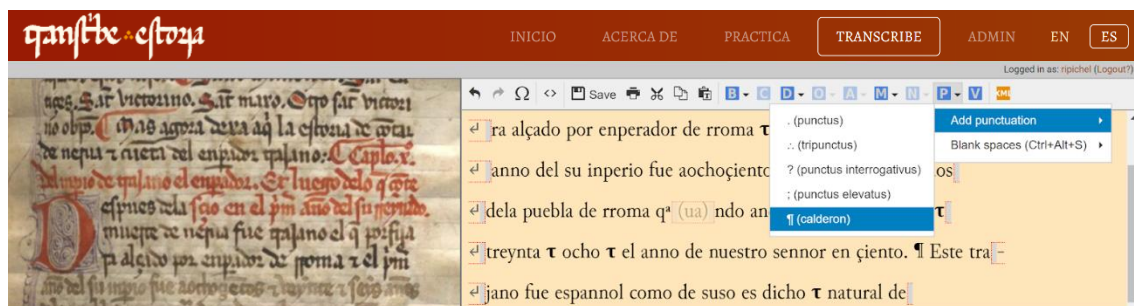
You will also have noticed that at the end of the first line of the rubric the word 'conte-
sçio' is cut in two: 'conte' appears on one line, and 'sçio' at the start of the second line. There is a line break that **divides a word**. I need to tell the system this. How do I do this? It's very easy. Just as if I was using Microsoft Word or a similar programme, I will put my cursor on the point where the line ends and press **enter**, or **return**. The system will automatically input a line break. If, like in this rubric, the line break appears in the middle of a word, when adding a line break using the enter key, the system automatically also includes the **hyphen**, showing a word has been split.



Next I will input the line breaks in the rest of this passage. As you are reading through both the manuscript image text, comparing it with the base text transcription, you will find that you get better and better at deciphering the palaeography with **more fluency**. Adding in the line breaks both makes transcribing the text easier and gives you a key opportunity to practise reading the writing in the manuscript and get used to it.

Pilcrows

Let's look now at the seventh line from the start of the rubric - just after the abbreviated 'ciento' we come across this symbol, a pilcrow, in red (¶). As we heard previously, they are similar to a symbol we sometimes see in Microsoft Word, to mark a **new paragraph**. We see these in many medieval documents, and they usually signify a new idea, a **new thematic unit**, similar to how we might start a new paragraph. Sometimes the ideas marked by pilcrows are shorter than we would mark nowadays with a new paragraph, such as short clauses, and other times we can see them before each item in a list. In some documents they might alternate in colour, red and blue ink, but in this manuscript they appear just in red. To include a pilcrow in the transcription platform I choose option **P** on the menu, and then add **punctuation**, and then **calderon**, which is the name for a **pilcrow** in Spanish. However, sometimes instead of adding pilcrows you may need to delete ones which appear in the base text transcription but are not seen in the manuscript image of C.



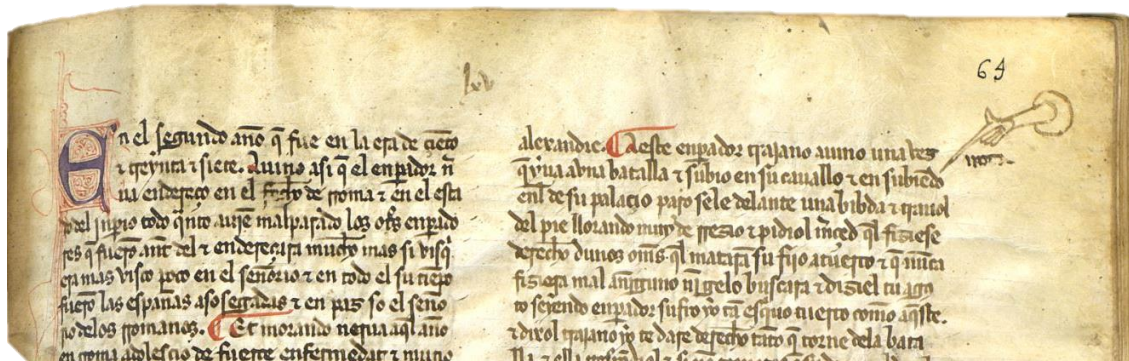
Column breaks

If we go now to the end of the column, in the last line, just after 'grant', we see that the text continues at the top of the next **column** - 'alexandre'. It's very common to see medieval documents like this one laid out with the text in two columns, although some documents had just one, and some had more than two. If you look closely, you can still see traces of the guide lines that helped the scribe to adjust his writing to neatly fit the lines and columns of the page. These are elements of the *mise en page* of the manuscript, which means how the text is laid out on the page. As well as the line breaks, I need to tell the system I have a column break. For this I choose from the top menu - **button B**, for **break**, and **add**, and a dialogue box pops up. I choose column break, and then insert.



A lovely manicule

One last thing for this manuscript that's worth commenting on here is this lovely **manicule**, a pointing finger drawn into the margin to bring the reader's attention to something in the second column. It may be pointing out a word or a passage that particularly interested a revisor or reader of the manuscript. Below the manicule you can just read the word 'nota'. We'll look into this more closely later in the project, but if you look at the word marked and you compare it with what appears in the base text transcription, perhaps you will be able to draw your own conclusions. **Here's a clue** - the manicule is indicating a scribal mistake.



I can carry on line breaking and inputting or deleting pilcrows until the whole passage is done, and then it will be ready to transcribe more fully. See you next!