

A codebreaking tutorial for the Voynich manuscript

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Based on the book *Ianus van Altrideicktus: Cracking the Voynich Code and Beyond*.
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1.) The word “**taurus**” in the Voynich manuscript (folio 68r3; written next to a seven-star drawing, which may represent Pleiades located in the Constellation Taurus; based on the earlier suggestion of Stephen Bax)

Inferred letter renderings:

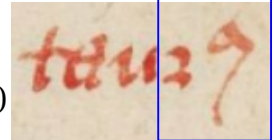
ſ = t; o = a; α = u; ʒ = r; ɣ = -us;

Comment:

ɣ corresponds to a standard medieval Latin abbreviation [Cappelli82], denoting “-us”, “-os”, “-es”, “-s”, “-um” at the end of words; and “con-”, “cun-”, “com-”, “cum-” at the beginnings of words.



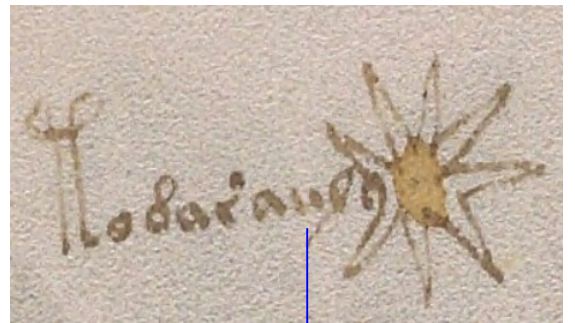
Roger Bacon’s word “**taurus**”:
(British Library Harley MS 2269)



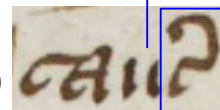
2.) The word “**maturandus**” (“ripening” in English) in the Voynich manuscript (the label of a big, “fat”, “ripening” star; folio 68r2)

Inferred letter renderings:

℥ = m; o = a; ſ = t; α = u; ʒ = r; α = {a, u}; ʌ = n; ɣ = d; ɣ = -us;



Roger Bacon’s word “**cancer**”:
(British Library Harley MS 2269)



= “-cer”

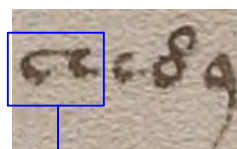
Voynich letter rendering:
ʒ = -cer

Standard medieval
Latin abbreviation
[Cappelli82]

3.) The word “**ictus**” (“strike, blow” in English) in the Voynich manuscript

Inferred letter renderings:

α = i; c = c; ſ = t; ɣ = -us;



John Dee’s Enochian letter “**i**”:
(British Library Sloan MS 3188)



4.) Some double letter renderings:

Based on the word “maturandus” (cf. point 2): $\alpha = \{a, u\}$;

Based on morphological similarity: $\epsilon = \{c, e\}$;

With these latter renderings, the following ubiquitous Voynich word suffices can easily be interpreted as

$\mathfrak{g}\mathfrak{g} = \text{-tus}$; $\epsilon\mathfrak{g}\mathfrak{g} = \{\text{-etus, -ctus}\}$; $\epsilon\epsilon\mathfrak{g}\mathfrak{g} = \{\text{-ectus, -cetus}\}$; $\epsilon\epsilon\epsilon\mathfrak{g}\mathfrak{g} = \{\text{-ecetus, -ccetus}\}$;

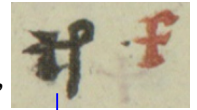
‘c’-shaped letter ‘e’s and ‘ccc’ sequences in John Dee’s Tuba veneris (Warburg Institute FBH 510):



5.) The interpretation of gallows (with double letter renderings):

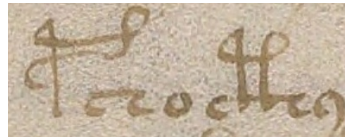
$\mathfrak{H} = \{m, v\}$; $\mathfrak{H} = \{n, f\}$; $\mathfrak{P} = \{p, b\}$;

A substitute glyph for letter ‘f’
from Johannes Trithemius’ Poligraphia
(Library of Congress, USA)



6.) The interpretation of composite gallows ($\mathfrak{H}\mathfrak{H}$, $\mathfrak{H}\mathfrak{P}$, $\mathfrak{P}\mathfrak{H}$):

The word “**piaminis**” in the Voynich manuscript:



p i a mini s

=> $\mathfrak{H}\mathfrak{H} = \text{mini}$

=> glyph ‘m’ in glyph ‘i’

=> $\mathfrak{H}\mathfrak{H} = \{\text{mini, vini}\}$; $\mathfrak{H}\mathfrak{P} = \{\text{nini, fini}\}$; $\mathfrak{P}\mathfrak{H} = \{\text{pini, bini}\}$;

7.) The interpretation of the plumed Voynich glyph \mathfrak{L} :

Based on medieval Latin writing traditions, a plume or a line over a vowel indicates
the insertion of a letter ‘n’ or ‘m’ afterwards [Cappelli82]

=> $\mathfrak{L} = \{\text{in, im}\}$;

Partial (polyphonic) cipher key based on the above interpretations:

$\mathfrak{g} = t$; $\mathfrak{o} = a$; $\alpha = \{a, u\}$; $\epsilon = \{c, e\}$; $\mathfrak{z} = r$; $\mathfrak{v} = n$; $\mathfrak{g} = d$; $\mathfrak{d} = d$; $\mathfrak{e} = i$; $\mathfrak{L} = \{\text{in, im}\}$;

Gallows: $\mathfrak{H} = \{m, v\}$; $\mathfrak{H} = \{n, f\}$; $\mathfrak{P} = \{p, b\}$;

Composite gallows: $\mathfrak{H}\mathfrak{H} = \{\text{mini, vini}\}$; $\mathfrak{H}\mathfrak{P} = \{\text{nini, fini}\}$; $\mathfrak{P}\mathfrak{H} = \{\text{pini, bini}\}$;

Abbreviations: $\mathfrak{g} = \{\text{con-, cun-, com-, cum-, -us, -os, -es, -s, -um}\}$; $\mathfrak{z} = \text{cer}$; $\mathfrak{g} = \text{cis}$;

Decryption example I: Extraneous writing on folio 66r:



Sentence transcribed from the illustration:

amica tundo i m u m c o n f e c c e r i e c u r c i n o r i s

Decoding:

amica tundo i m u m c o n f e c c e r i e c u r c i n o r i s

Solution (appears in Latin):

amica tundo i m u m c o n f e c c e r i e c u r c i n o r i s

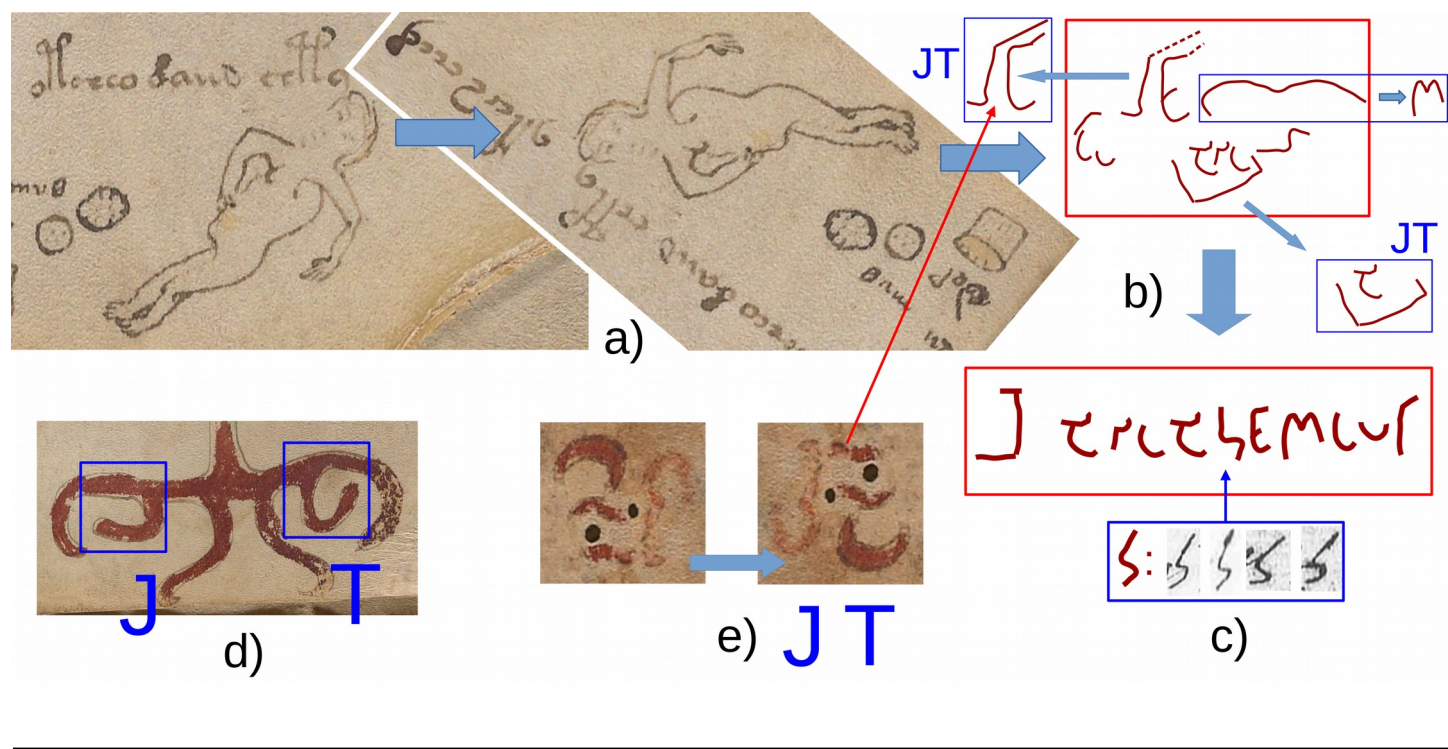
([]: omissions; (): extra letter)

English translation:

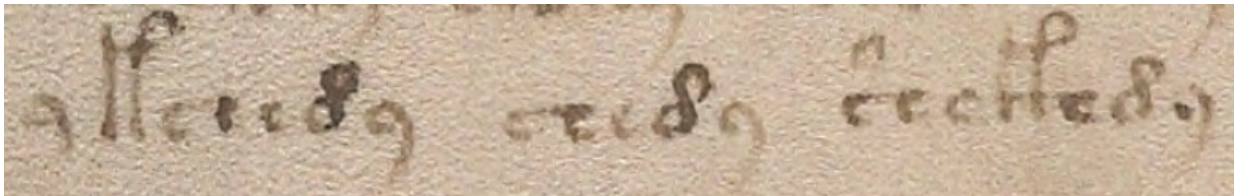
The girl bruised her inside, damaged her liver.

(This solution is in full accord with the nearby illustration.)

Johannes Trithemius' steganographically concealed name in the illustration on folio 66r (a,b) and his possible initials in the Voynich manuscript (d,e):



Decryption example II: Text-ending phrase on folio 65v:



Decoding:

con f i c t u s i c t u s in fini t u s

Solution (appears in Latin):

confictus ictus infinitus

English translation:

Hoax of an infinite blow

(This solution expresses well the overall spirit of the Voynich manuscript.)

References

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Voynich manuscript: The Voynich manuscript is located at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, USA: <http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/collections/highlights/voynich-manuscript> ; <https://pre1600ms.beinecke.library.yale.edu/docs/pre1600.ms408.HTM> ; and <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2002046>

Illustrations: Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (Cipher manuscript MS 408, General Collection); the British Library; the Warburg Institute; and the Library of Congress (USA).