THE PROBLEM WITH PRACTICALITY: RETHINKING LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLISH MEDICAL RECIPES, 1375–1500

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Thesis approved for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the validity of seeing late medieval vernacular remedies as more than just utilitarian texts. Until now, most commentators have argued, or assumed, that medical recipes were conceptualised by their earliest writers and readers as texts solely designed to serve a curative or therapeutic purpose: they have looked for physical evidence of use in the manuscripts; connected particular codices to specific medical practitioners; discussed the scientific principles behind the efficacy that some remedies may have had, and explored whether specific types of cure, such as charms, were deployed by specific types of medical practitioner.

My thesis does not dispute that many remedy collections were put to practical use, but argues that writers and readers conceptualised recipes in a range of other ways too. An introductory chapter explores the types of people who engaged with medical knowledge and the way recipes portray them. Then, Chapter Two uses codicological evidence, such as scribal organisation and reader annotation, to suggest that some writers and readers derived pleasure, pride or satisfaction from the acts of producing, possessing and reading remedy books, rather than using them. The next two chapters explore – first in verse (Chapter Three) and then in prose (Chapter Four) – the remedies' formal, phonetic, and linguistic features, considering the ways that they fulfil, impede or overshadow the texts' practical purpose. In this section, I also compare the ways in which the language and figurative devices used in recipes work in other kinds of writing, in order to develop a more precise understanding of the connections and distinctions between discourses.

The last part of the thesis focuses on thematic connections between recipes and other text-types. In Chapters Five and Six, recurring motifs and similar attitudes to time, wonder and transgression suggest reciprocal imaginative exchanges between remedies, romances and fabliaux. Chapter Seven examines unexpected parallels between serious and parodic remedies, arguing that this blurred boundary creates interpretive challenges for readers. In these final three chapters, I hope to draw attention to an interpretive element overlooked in the recipes: the texts do not just contain instructions to be translated into real-world referents and actions; they can also bring words, forms, and ideas into play with one another, eluding straightforward interpretations as resolutely as literary texts.

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Conventions and Abbreviations

Transcriptions

In transcriptions, I have expanded abbreviations silently. While I retain the original punctuation of the scribe, I have decapitalised majuscule initials which are not serving a clear semantic or syntactic purpose; ambiguous cases are acknowledged with a footnote. I have also modernised word division to ease the reading process. When it is relevant to the discussion, rubricated text or display script is marked in bold. Text added by me to complete the sense of a quotation is enclosed in square brackets ([]). Text crossed out by a scribe or reader is enclosed in angle brackets (<>). When text that has been crossed out can no longer be read, I signal this with a question mark enclosed in angle brackets (<?>). When the text is illegible because of script, trimming, or the binding of the manuscript, I signal this with a question mark enclosed in square brackets ([?]). Text written above the main body is enclosed by upper caret marks (^). I use strokes to signal virgules executed by scribes (/) and a vertical line to signal the end of a line of verse (|).

Abbreviations

BodL	Oxford, Bodleian Library
BL	London, British Library
CGC	Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College
CMC	Cambridge, Magdalene College Pepys Library
CUL	Cambridge, University Library

DIMEV *Digital Index of Middle English Verse*, ed. by Linne R. Mooney and others, <www.dimev.net>

DMLBS *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, ed. by R.E Latham, David Howlett, and Richard Ashdowne, <http://clt.brepolis.net/dmlbs/Default.aspx>

DOST *The Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/>

EETS Early English Text Society

eVK2 Patricia Kurtz and Linda Ehrsam Voigts, *Scientific and Medical Writings in Old and Middle English: An Electronic Reference*, <https://indexcat.nlm.nih.gov/vivisimo/cgi-bin/query-meta?v%3aproject=indexcat&v%3asources=etkevk2&> and <https://cctr1.umkc.edu/search>

HEHL San Marino, Huntington Library

IMEP *The Index of Middle English Prose* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1984–present). See bibliography for details of individual volumes.

LCL Lincoln, Cathedral Library

Manual George R. Keiser, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050–1500: Volume 10: Works of Science and Information*, ed. by J.B. Severs and A.E. Hartung (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1998)

MED *The Middle English Dictionary,* ed. by Hans Kurath and others (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952–2002); accessed online at <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>

MPJL *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, ed. by Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS os 192 (London: Oxford University Press, 1934)

NIMEV *A New Index of Middle English Verse*, ed. by Julia Boffey and A.S.G. Edwards (London: The British Library, 2005)

NLW Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales

OCC Oxford, Corpus Christi College

OED *The Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. by John Simpson and others, accessed online at < http://www.oed.com/>

PML New York, Pierpoint Morgan Library

PROME	*The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England,* ed. by C. Given-Wilson and others, http://www.sd-editions.com/PROME/home.html
Riverside	*The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
RH	*The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. by Denton Fox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981)
SKB	Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket
TCC	Cambridge, Trinity College
TFA	*Treatises of Fistula in Ano, Hæmorrhoids, and Clysters*, ed. by D'Arcy Power, EETS os 22 (London: Oxford University Press, 1910)
YM	York, York Minster
WT	London, Wellcome Trust

Introduction[1]

> It must not be poetry that I read that night, but a devotional or even a cookery book. Perhaps the last was best for my mood, and I chose an old one of recipes and miscellaneous household hints. I read about the care of aspidistras and how to wash lace and black woollen stockings, and I learned that a package or an envelope sealed with white of egg cannot be steamed open. Though what use that knowledge would ever be to me I could not imagine.[2]
>
> Barbara Pym, *Excellent Women* (1952)

Useful texts can be useless to particular readers at particular moments, or new uses can be discovered for them: the narrator of Barbara Pym's novel, *Excellent Women,* imagines that a book of recipes would calm and distract her better than poetry or devotional writings. She reaches for the recipe book in the same way that Chaucer's sleepless narrator in *The Book of the Duchess* reaches for a collection of fictional tales, later revealed as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. He hopes it will afford him some 'playe'.[3] Today, practical writings are often read for 'playe' and pleasure, or possessed for reasons other than the practical: we own them because we feel we should own them, because they signal a well-organised household or because we think that, one day, they *could* be useful. Practical texts also enable us to imagine our own metamorphoses: if I read this cookery book, I can imagine making this expensive dish or becoming like the book's author, who may have written the collection to show what a glamorous, healthy, or down-to-earth person he or she is.

[1] The research for this thesis was supported by the Wellcome Trust [grant no. 108641/Z/15/Z].
[2] Barbara Pym, *Excellent Women* (London: Cape, 1952), p. 171.
[3] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Book of the Duchess,* in *Riverside*, line 50.

This thesis argues that a similarly diverse range of motivations drove the copying, reading, and possession of late medieval remedies, another kind of recipe collection. Instead of teaching readers to produce foodstuffs, medical recipes taught them to prepare healing treatments. They were one of the most frequently copied texts in late medieval England, as a comparison will illustrate: more than eighty manuscripts survive of Chaucer's vernacular story collection, *The Canterbury Tales*; we know, however, of at least one thousand nine hundred copies of vernacular remedy collections containing three or more recipes.[4] This, along with the vast number of uncounted individual recipes copied on spare manuscript pages, suggests that recipes were an integral part of many people's social and textual lives.

It may seem unlikely that these recipes could be used for anything other than the practical task of healing bodies. Authors and scribes of remedy collections and other medical texts are usually quite clear about medicine's practical function: echoing Isidore of Seville's definition, a fifteenth-century prologue to a medical treatise defines medicine's use as: 'Lechecraft is man to hele . of all maner sekenesse | And to kepe hym hool þat is hol . as fer as craft may'.[5] Prologues to remedy collections often align the recipes' function with the first, restorative part of this definition:

[4] Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales* (London: Routledge, 1993; first published 1985), p. 8. In *eVK2*, a search for fourteenth and fifteenth-century recipes yields 1925 results and they have only recorded groups of three recipes or more and individual recipes of interest. Of course, not all of these are copies of the same recipe, so the comparison with *The Canterbury Tales* is skewed. Nevertheless, it does show that recipes were a prominent and well-known genre and that it is misleading to privilege literary texts when representing and discussing medieval textual culture.

[5] BL, MS Sloane 340, f. 65v. The prologue – though prose – is lineated like verse (as discussed in Chapter Three). For Isidore of Seville's definition, see *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi: Etymologiarvm sive originvm: Vol. 1: Libros I–X*, ed. by W.M. Lindsay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), Bk IV, p. 165, lines 1–3: 'Medicina est quae corporis vel tuetur vel restaurat salutem' ('Medicine is that which protects or restores the health of the body').

> Here beginnes gode medicines for diuers euill þat men has for god lechis has drawin þem out of many gode bokys galien and asclopus for þei were þe best lechis in þe werld and who so will do as þe bok techis he may be sekir to be hole of his euill[6]
>
> [*galien* = Galen; *asclopus* = Asclepius or Asclepiades; *sekir* = certain; *hole* = recovered]

The prologue promises that, if the recipes are followed properly, they will return the patient to health. This statement makes it hard to imagine any other function for the texts. It is also hard because of the subject matter. One can understand why luxury or exotic foodstuffs might be pleasing to contemplate, but would a reader really leaf through a book about scabs, boils and broken bones for pleasure?

This thesis argues that readers *did* derive various kinds of pleasure and satisfaction from remedy books and that they wrote, owned and read these collections for a range of cultural, intellectual and imaginative reasons. It also contends that, though many medieval remedies might be considered inefficacious by modern standards and, indeed, by their own self-proclaimed standards, they might have been considered more efficacious by contemporary readers: a remedy might not make a patient 'hol', but its application might distract, empower and soothe, mentally or physically. Scholars have recognised the placebo effect's capacity to redeem medieval medical practice, but they have not studied in depth how the words and structures of *texts* could contribute to it.[7] This thesis will therefore draw attention to the ways in which the language and form of the recipes might relieve bodily discomfort directly, or fulfil that purpose indirectly by communicating healing knowledge. It shall also explore, though, how the crafted structures of the texts, and the cognitive, emotional, and

[6] BL, MS Sloane 213, f. 138r.
[7] See p. 15 for bibliography.

aesthetic effects these produce upon readers, might exceed or even *im*pede recipes' proclaimed instructional purpose.

Recipes will be shown, then, to differ from what they are usually reputed to be: utilitarian, unartful texts written and read *solely* for the sake of practical action.[8] Moreover, I will demonstrate that they are linguistically, formally, and imaginatively interconnected with other fifteenth-century discourses: writers of remedies and writers of more consistently literary or imaginative texts influenced and inspired one another, and both groups partook in shared cultural modes of creative expression. Tracing these connections and overlaps will allow us to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of what 'practical', 'careful', 'playful', and 'imaginative' writing and reading meant for late medieval people.

Vernacular Medical Writing and its Sources

Many types of medical writing existed in Latin and English in fourteenth and fifteenth-century England.[9] A distinction could be drawn between theoretical and practical writings: theoretical texts described the body's physiological and anatomical workings, while practical texts contained remedies for ailments. However, as we shall see, practical texts produced by educated writers sometimes contained large amounts of theory too, describing the causes of different ailments. The theory normally deployed in understanding and curing diseases revolved around the four primary qualities (hot, cold,

[8] Detailed discussion of extant scholarship occurs on pp. 13–18.

[9] For overviews of these genres, see Linda E. Voigts, 'Medical Prose', in *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres,* ed. by A.S.G. Edwards (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984), pp. 315–35.

wet, and dry).[10] Two of these were predominant in each of the four elements: air (hot and wet), fire (hot and dry), water (wet and cold) and earth (cold and dry). A combination of these elements, with one always predominant, formed all terrestrial matter, including the human body and the substances within it. Four types of fluid substance, known as humours, were identified with the four elements and their qualities: black bile (cold and dry), yellow bile (hot and dry), phlegm (wet and cold) and blood (hot and wet). In each person, these humours existed in different proportions. Each had their own equilibrium, a state in which these four qualities existed in ideal proportion with one another, though not necessarily in equal amounts. That proportion was equivalent to a state of health. Illness occurred when the ideal proportion of humours and qualities was disrupted by an external force or factor, such as injury, astrological influence, or excess food. The proportion had to be restored through substances that possessed the opposite quality to that in excess or deficiency: for instance, a learned practical compendium begins, 'If þe hed-ache be of hete, lete him vse coolde þingis, as watir of endyue or of roses'.[11]

This theory informed other medical writings too. *Regimen,* another widely-circulated genre, offered guidelines on preserving health that fulfilled the second obligation of leechcraft outlined in the prologue above: 'to kepe hym hool þat is hol'. They instructed readers on how to manage their sleep, exercise, repletion or excretion, emotions, air quality, and food or drink. Though not inherently harmful, these things,

[10] On this theory, see Joel Kaye, *A History of Balance, 1250–1375: The Emergence of a New Model of Equilibrium and its Impact on Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 128–240; Luke Demaitre, *Medieval Medicine: The Art of Healing from Head to Toe* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2013), pp. 15–18.

[11] *Healing and Society in Medieval England: A Middle English Translation of the Pharmaceutical Writings of Gilbertus Anglicus,* ed. by Faye Getz (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p. 1.

known as *non-naturals*, could upset the proportion of qualities and thereby bring about disease when they were engaged in and consumed too much, too little, or in the wrong way.[12] Uroscopy texts were also grounded in the same theory: by analysing the colour, texture and taste of a patient's urine, medical practitioners could diagnose humoral imbalances. Similarly, phlebotomy texts advocated bloodletting as an outlet for excess humours.

These medical texts had not always been written in English. Between the Norman Conquest and the late fourteenth century, they were predominantly written, copied, and read in Latin by academic and religious communities. Behind these Latin writings, there was a long history of Roman, Greek, and Arabic medical thought. Roman writings, composed in Latin, heavily influenced Old English medical writings.[13] Some of these Roman texts also influenced post-Conquest medical writings too: for example, Pliny the Elder's second-century encyclopaedia of healing knowledge, *Natural History,* was known to late medieval medical writers.[14]

Although Roman writers such as Pliny used older Greek sources, there was a key difference between the traditions: Roman medical compendia were dedicated to recording cures, while Greek thinkers offered detailed theoretical explanations of the body's workings.[15] Two Greek medical theorists are often referred to in late medieval writings. The first is Hippocrates (born c. 460BC). Although he probably did not author many of them, his name became associated with a group of Greek medical writings, now

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[12] See Nancy Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 101.
[13] Faye Getz, *Medicine in the English Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 46–48.
[14] Charles G. Nauert JR., 'Humanists, Science, and Pliny: Changing Approaches to a Classical Author', *American Historical Review,* 84 (1979), 72–85 (pp. 74–75).
[15] As Getz, *Medicine in the English Middle Ages,* p. 45 notes, Pliny often defined his writings in opposition to those of his Greeks predecessors, which he considered excessively interested in the body.

referred to as the Hippocratic Corpus. Hippocratic medicine, which considered every natural phenomenon to have a rational cause, is credited with the earliest written description of all four humours.[16] One of the most significant proponents of Hippocratic ideas was the second-century Greek physician and philosopher, Galen. Galen developed the theory of the primary qualities by emphasising the intricate relativity of the body: bodies were not only healthy when the primary qualities were well-proportioned in each corporeal substance, individual organ and body part; the complexions of these parts also had to exist in healthy proportion to one another.[17] Galen extended a relativity that he found in the earlier Greek writings of Aristotle.[18]

But how did the writings of Hippocrates, Galen, and other Greeks come to influence twelfth and thirteenth-century Latin medical texts and later English writings? The texts were mediated to the Latin-speaking West through the translations and commentaries of Arabic writers such as Al-Farabi and Avicenna. From the eleventh century onwards, these Arabic texts were translated into Latin by scholars such as Constantine the African, Gerard of Cremona, and Adelard of Bath. Centres of translation developed in Toledo and in continental schools and universities such as Montpellier, Salerno, and Bologna. In the Italian city-states, medical learning had a long tradition which pre-existed the universities.[19] In Oxford and Cambridge, however, the first recorded medical graduates only date from the early fourteenth century.[20] In both universities, provision for medical learning remained small throughout the Middle

[16] Kaye, *History of Balance*, p. 168.
[17] On other aspects of Galen's relativity, see Kaye, *History of Balance,* pp. 128–82.
[18] Kaye, *History of Balance,* pp. 128–82.
[19] Getz, *Medicine in the English Middle Ages,* p. 65.
[20] Faye Getz, 'The Faculty of Medicine before 1500', in *The History of the University of Oxford: Volume II: Late Medieval Oxford,* ed. by J.I. Catto and T.A.R Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 373–413 (p. 381).

Ages.[21] The only major medical writer explicitly associated with an English university in surviving documentation is John of Gaddesden, who wrote *Rosa medicinae*, a Latin compendium of medical knowledge and cures, in the first quarter of the fourteenth-century.[22] The intellectual background of other writers is unclear: for example, Gilbert the Englishman, who produced the influential thirteenth-century therapeutic treatise, *Compendium medicinae,* may have been a priest.[23]

The years 1375–1500 (the period covered in this thesis) were crucial for the development of vernacular medical writing. During these years, many Latin medical works, such as Gilbert's *Compendium*, were translated into English for the first time and new medical writings (or new compilations of old ones) were written in the vernacular.[24] Several factors contributed to this. The general growth in literacy in the vernacular is one crucial context: from the late fourteenth century onwards, literacy levels among lay merchants and artisans increased, leading to a greater commercial market for vernacular books, as well as more amateur book production for personal use.[25]

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[21] Carole Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England* (Stroud: Sutton, 1995), pp. 108–9.

[22] Peter Murray Jones, 'Language and Register in English Medieval Surgery', in *Language in Medieval Britain: Networks and Exchanges: Proceedings of the 2013 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2015), pp. 74–89 (p. 78).

[23] Getz, *Medicine in the English Middle Ages*, p. 39.

[24] On English as a scientific language see *Medical and Scientific Writing in Late Medieval English,* ed. by Irma Taavitsainen and Päivi Pahta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Tony Hunt, 'The Languages of Medical Writing in Medieval England', in *Medieval and Early Modern Literature, Science and Medicine*, ed. by Rachel Falconer and Denis Renevey (Tübingen: Narr, 2013), pp. 79–101; Linda E. Voigts, 'Multitudes of Middle English Medical Manuscripts, or the Englishing of Science and Medicine', in *Manuscript Sources of Medieval Medicine*, ed. by Margaret R. Schleissner (New York: Garland, 1995), pp. 183–95; H.S. Bennett, 'Science and Information in English Writings of the Fifteenth Century', *The Modern Language Review,* 39 (1944), 1–8; Peter Murray Jones, 'Information and Science', in *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 97–111 (pp. 103–4).

[25]Malcolm Parkes, 'The Literacy of the Laity', in *Literature and Western Civilisation: The Medieval World*, ed. by David Daiches and Anthony Thorlby (London: Aldus Books, 1973), pp. 555–77; Malcolm Richardson, *Middle Class Writing in Late Medieval London* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011); Carol Meale, 'Amateur Book Production and the Miscellany in Late Medieval East Anglia', in *Insular Books: Vernacular Manuscript Miscellanies in Late Medieval Britain,* ed. by Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 157–73.

Furthermore, the cost of paper declined, leading to the production of cheaper books that were more accessible to a broader range of the population.[26] These things were both a cause and a consequence of increased vernacular text production in many areas of culture: poetry was composed in English by more writers and the Wycliffite Middle English translation of the Bible was produced. Practical and scientific writings of all kinds, encompassing astronomy, astrology, alchemy, and physiognomy, were translated from Latin into English for the first time since the Conquest. But the increase in vernacular *medical* texts was especially noticeable: six times as many English medical writings survive from the fifteenth century than the fourteenth century.[27] A particularly significant medical writer was Henry Daniel, whose vernacular text on urine diagnosis, *Liber Uricrisiarum*, is one of the earliest medical treatises in English.[28] The text adapted and synthesised a large number of Greek, Latin, and Arabic sources; its relatively wide circulation is indicated by its survival in thirty-seven manuscripts.[29]

As the example of the *Liber Uricrisiarum* suggests, learned Latin texts were not merely translated into English: they were often adapted, abridged, rearranged and combined to produce new texts. In particular, recipes embedded in longer theoretical writings were extracted and copied alongside remedies from other sources in patchwork processes of compilation. By taking one recipe from the *Compendium medicinae* and tracing its reappearance in several compilations, Faye Getz has shown how influential

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[26] Eric Kwakkel, 'A New Type of Book for a New Type of Reader: The Emergence of Paper in Vernacular Book Production', *The Library,* 4 (2003), 219–48.

[27] This estimate, which originated with Dorothy Waley Singer, has been reproduced in many studies including Faye Getz, 'Gilbertus Anglicus Anglicized', *Medical History,* 26 (1982), 436–42 (p. 436) and Peter Murray Jones, 'Information and Science', p. 101. Rossel Hope Robbins, 'A Note on the Singer Survey of Medical Manuscripts in the British Isles', *Chaucer Review*, 4 (1969), 66–70, questions the accuracy of Singer's figures but agrees that, proportionally, the increase was dramatic.

[28] Sarah Star, '*Anima Carnis in Sanguine Est*: Blood, Life and *The King of Tars', Journal of English and Germanic Philosophy,* 115 (2016), 442–62 (pp. 445–46).

[29] Star, '*Anima Carnis*', p. 445.

Gilbert's text was.[30] Conversely, Margaret Ogden has found parallels for recipes in an English remedy collection, often known as the *Liber de diversis medicinis*, in a wide range of classical, Arabic, Latin, Anglo-Norman and English sources.[31] This piecemeal extraction produced remedy books that were, stylistically, quite different from the extended, theoretical treatises from which they came. Compare this discussion of red eyes in a fifteenth-century translation of Gilbert's *Compendium* to an extract from part of a remedy book concerned with eye ailments. Although the former is not the source of the latter, the juxtaposition adequately illustrates the differences between the two modes of writing:

> A mannes iȝen ben oþirwhiles rede or infecte. Redenes comeþ of blode; infeccion comeþ of oþer humours and of oþer sikenes, as of þe ȝelewe yvele, or of stopping of þe splene, or of heting of þe lyver. To hele suche infeccions, firste þou muste hele þe sekenes þat ben cause of hem [...] Of blode comeþ redenes, and not al oneli, but oþerwhiles a gobet of fleisshe growing on þe iȝe. And oþerwhiles, for grete plente of blode and feblenes of þe iȝe, þe blode lieþ y-congelid on þe iȝe and makeþ þe iȝen rede. Oþerwhiles þei ben rede for grete plente of blode þat is in þe veynes, and oþerwhiles þoroughe falling or þorouȝ smerting, blode falleþ into þe iȝen and makeþ hem rede.
> [....]
> And if þe yȝe be kitte in þe whijt of þe yȝe, or if þe whijt be y-broke, heel it herwith: Take sarcacol, mastike, encense, sandragon, emachite. And tempere hem with sangrinary þat is clepid sheppardis purse, or planteyn. But vse here consolidatiues, þat is to seie, suche þingis þat han vertu to souden a þing þat is y-kitte or broken, as comfery, and daiesy, and þe myddel comfery, and centory, and planteyn, and auence, and sandragon, and emachite.[32]
>
> **For him þat may not wel see and hath rede eyn.** Tak whiȝte gynger and rubbe it on a weston in a fayre basyn of metal and tak as meche salt as þow hast of powder and grynde hem wel

[30]Getz, 'Gilbertus Anglicus Anglicized', pp. 441–42.
[31] *The "Liber de diversis medicinis" in the Thornton Manuscript*, ed. by Margaret Ogden, EETS os 207 (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), pp. xx–xxviii.
[32] Getz, ed., *Healing and Society,* pp. 54–55.

> togydder in þe basyn and tempere hem togydder wit whit wyn and let it stande a day and a nyȝt and þanne tak þe thynne þat stondyt aboue and do it a ful glas and when þe syke goth to bedde tak a fether and wet þerinne and onoynte wel þe sore eyn þerwyth and he schal be hool sekerly.
> **For watering eyn** . Tak a reed coul lef an onoynte it wit þe white of an ey and ley it to þe watteryng eyn when þow goost to bedde laste.
> **For to slee wormes þat etyn ey ledys**. Tak salt and brenne it in a colowte and temper it wit hony and wit a fether anoynte þe eyeledys when þe seek goth to bedde.[33]

The second extract exemplifies the kind of remedy book on which this thesis focuses. It is far less detailed and contains no information about the causes of red eyes, quickly moving from a cure for red eyes to cures for other ailments.[34] While Gilbert's interest in the various causes of red eyes is conveyed through the way he strings clauses together with the conjunctions 'or' and 'oþerwhiles', the remedy book is characterised by strings of imperatives linked paratactically by 'and'. The emphasis here is not on the possibilities of theory but on the certainties of action.

Some of these simple, practically-orientated remedy books appear alongside culinary and domestic recipes, devotional writings, and poetry, suggesting that they were considered part of a 'household book', a term used literally and broadly by Julia Boffey to describe 'a book that was in use in a specific household'.[35] The majority, though, are copied alongside other medical, astronomical and astrological texts in what Linda Voigts terms the 'scientific book'.[36] These could still have been used domestically

[33] WT, MS Wellcome 542, f. 1v. Rubrication is marked in bold.
[34] For an analogous comparison of the stylistic differences between scholastic and remedy book registers in Latin surgical writing, see Murray Jones, 'Language and Register', pp. 74–89.
[35]Julia Boffey, 'Bodleian Library, MS Arch Selden B.24 and Definitions of the Household Book', in *The English Medieval Book: Studies in Memory of Jeremy Griffiths*, ed. by A.S.G. Edwards and others (London: The British Library, 2000), pp. 125–34 (p. 129).
[36] Linda E. Voigts, 'Scientific and Medical Books' in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375–1475*, ed. by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 345–402.

or copied and compiled by interested members of the literate laity, but they could also have been owned by more extensively educated practitioners, including Latin-speaking ones. (I shall discuss the types of people who engaged with the collections in more depth in Chapter One).

This prospect of a Latin-speaking readership raises the question of the remedy books' continuing relationship with Latin writings. Simple, practically-orientated remedy collections of the kind exemplified above were not just a late medieval vernacular phenomenon excerpted from earlier Latin theoretical sources: they had been compiled in Latin itself for centuries and this circulation continued in the later Middle Ages.[37] The decision to focus this study on vernacular remedy books might, then, seem odd. It is partly pragmatic: it would be difficult to carry out a detailed study that spanned two languages and several centuries. It seems more worthwhile to study one language in detail before engaging in comparisons with others. The decision was also informed by the fifteenth-century explosion of vernacular collections: the vernacular was clearly recognised as a suitable language in which to write the entirety or majority of a recipe collection. Moreover, focusing on the vernacular enables us to highlight comparisons and connections with vernacular literature of more canonical sorts, which was also flourishing during the time period under examination.

Admittedly, the collections' linguistic boundaries are porous: many vernacular recipe collections contain at least a few Latin recipes, charms, or individual phrases. However, extensive scholarly attention has already been devoted to code-switching in medieval medical texts and so I have devoted less attention to this than to other

[37] Pearl Kibre and Lynn Thorndike, eds, *Catalogue of Incipits of Mediaeval Scientific Writings in Latin,* accessed online at <https://indexcat.nlm.nih.gov>, records Latin recipe collections from the ninth century.

linguistic features.[38] Nevertheless, throughout the thesis, I remain sensitive to this Anglo-Latin network of inheritance and exchange, by noting significant traditions, adaptations, and parallels.

Scholarship

Scholarship on vernacular remedy books has followed several patterns. The earliest attention was editorial: from the nineteenth century to the present, editions of vernacular collections have been produced by scholars such as Fritz Heinrich, Warren Dawson, and Margaret Ogden.[39] Faye Getz has also produced an edition of Gilbert the Englishman's *Compendium*.[40] In recent years, digital editions and transcriptions have been produced through projects such as the *Malaga Corpus of Late Middle English Scientific Prose.*[41] These editions have made medical texts more accessible and, containing detailed glossaries, have foregrounded the challenges and fascinations of an abundant, but obscure, Middle English medical vocabulary. However, still relatively few in number, the editions have not been able to capture the variety and plenteousness of the collections: although the same recipes often appear from collection to collection, the processes of excerption, adaptation, and rearrangement outlined above mean that compilations containing several similar recipes are, in other respects, entirely different.

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[38] E.g., Tony Hunt, 'Code-Switching in Medical Texts', in *Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain*, ed. by D.A. Trotter (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 131–47; Päivi Pahta, 'On Structures of Code-Switching in Medical Texts from Medieval England', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 104 (2003), 197–210 and Päivi Pahta, 'Code Switching in Medieval Medical Writing', in Taavitsainen and Pahta, eds, *Medical and Scientific Writing,* pp. 73–99.

[39] *Ein Mittelenglisches Medizinbuch*, ed. by Fritz Heinrich (Halle: Niemayer, 1896); *A Leechbook or Collection of Medical Recipes of the Fifteenth Century: The Text of MS no. 136 of the Medical Society of London, Together with a Transcript into Modern Spelling,* ed. by Warren R. Dawson (London: Macmillan, 1934); Ogden, ed., *The "Liber de diversis medicinis".*

[40] Getz, ed., *Healing and Society.*

[41] Accessible online at https://hunter.uma.es/.

In the last three decades, this editorial attention has been supplemented by the development of finding aids to assist scholars in locating vernacular medical texts in manuscripts.[42] Linda Voigts and Patricia Kurtz's *Scientific and Medical Writings in Old and Middle English: An Electronic Reference*, first published in 2001, contains entries for over ten thousand medical writings and records groups of three recipes or more, as well as individual recipes of interest. *The Index of Middle English Prose,* an ongoing survey of the vernacular prose in key repositories around the world, is also an indispensable tool. The different terminology used by the authors to categorise texts can be confusing: terms such as 'medical recipes', 'remedies', 'scientific recipes', 'recipes', and 'miscellaneous recipes' create the impression of difference without offering further elaboration. Furthermore, sometimes large collections copied by one hand are split by the cataloguer into separate items which obscures the collections' coherence.[43] Nevertheless, *The IMEP* remains a vital way of locating the collections and, because it lists every vernacular prose text in a codex, it allows one to situate the remedies within their broader manuscript contexts.

These tools, along with George Keiser's *Manual* of Middle English scientific writings, helpfully supplement finding aids for Latin texts and I have used them to locate remedy collections in over seventy manuscripts; these form the basis of this thesis.[44] Remedies did not, of course, just exist in collections: they were also copied individually. However, in order to study as many recipes as possible, I have chosen to concentrate

[42] Full details of these aids are provided in the list of abbreviations.
[43] E.g., the entry for BodL, MS Laud misc. 553 in S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., *Manuscripts in the Laudian Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. xix–xx, 56–71. For other recipe-related challenges confronting authors and readers of *IMEP*, see Kari Anne Rand Schmidt, 'The Index of Middle English Prose and Late Medieval English Recipes', *English Studies*, 75 (1994), 423–29.
[44] On Latin texts, see Kibre and Thorndike, eds, *A Catalogue of Incipits*.

upon large remedy collections (usually those that contain over one hundred remedies). Consequently, a recurrent and unifying focus of this thesis is the impulses behind, and dynamics produced by, the form of the collection, and its relationship with other kinds of miscellany.

The finding aids described above have facilitated two kinds of scholarly attention to recipes: a linguistic interest in the development of vernacular scientific vocabulary and an interest in the efficacy and practical use of remedies.[45] The latter type of scholarship has followed several trends. Firstly, mid-twentieth-century German scholarship focused on understanding remedies as a type of *Fachliteratur* that, along with other kinds of agricultural and household texts, enabled readers to learn practical skills.[46] More recently, researchers at Nottingham University have tested some cures and found them to be efficacious.[47] Other scholars have also considered the healing principles behind the remedies and the possibility of a placebo effect.[48] Similarly, in his study of vernacular Spanish medical writings, Michael Solomon explores how 'tropes of usefulness, professional competence and efficacy' in medical texts might have encouraged a reader to construct a 'fiction of his or her imminent well-being'.[49]

A third group of scholars, including Claire Jones, Linda Voigts and Irma Taavitsainen, have tried to connect the copying and use of specific manuscripts to

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[45] On English as a scientific language, see Introduction, fn. 24.
[46] E.g., Gerhard Eis, *Mittelalterliche Fachliteratur* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1962); *Fachliteratur des Mittelalters, Festschrift für Gerhard Eis,* ed. by Gundolf Keil and others (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1968).
[47] <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/news/pressreleases/2015/march/ancientbiotics---a-medieval-remedy-for-modern-day-superbugs.aspx> [accessed 1/10/2017]
[48] E.g., Anne van Arsdall, 'Challenging the "Eye of Newt" Image of Medieval Medicine', in *The Medieval Hospital and Medical Practice*, ed. by Barbara S. Bowers (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 195–205; Toni Mount, *Dragon's Blood and Willow Bark: The Mysteries of Medieval Medicine* (Stroud: Amberly, 2015), pp. 104–16.
[49] Michael Solomon, *Fictions of Well-Being: Sickly Readers and Vernacular Medical Writing in Late Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), pp. 7, 9.

certain practitioners, geographical regions or copying houses.[50] Lea Olsan and Catherine Rider have explored whether particular kinds of medical recipe, such as charms, were used by particular kinds of medical practitioner.[51] Finally, scholars such as Linne Mooney have detected in medical manuscripts physical signs of practical use, such as droplets of blood and fragments of herbs.[52]

This scholarship has been valuable in establishing the social, intellectual and corporeal contexts in which medical remedies were used. Undoubtedly, many manuscripts *were* used to heal (or try to heal) real human bodies. And yet the tendency to assume that this is the only function they served often leads scholars to overlook clues to other imaginative and cultural roles they may have performed: in an essay on the problems inherent in cataloguing recipes, Henry Hargreaves articulated a judgment implicit in this lack of attention to recipes' aesthetic and imaginative qualities: he proclaimed that the remedies 'have, of course, not the slightest scintilla of literary interest'.[53]

Only in the last decade have scholars begun to challenge this assessment. The essays of three scholars have been particularly influential on my approach to medieval medical writing. First, in 'The Poetics of Practicality', Lisa Cooper carries out close

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[50] Claire Jones, 'Discourse Communities and Medical Texts', in Taavitsainen and Pahta, eds, *Medical and Scientific Writing,* pp. 23–36; Irma Taavitsainen, 'Scriptorial "House-Styles" and Discourse Communities', in Taavitsainen and Pahta, eds, *Medical and Scientific Writing,* pp. 209–40; Linda E. Voigts, 'The "Sloane Group": Related Scientific and Medical Manuscripts from the Fifteenth Century in the Sloane Collection', *The British Library Journal,* 16 (1990), 26–57.

[51] Lea T. Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice', in *Social History of Medicine*, 16 (2003), 344–66; Catherine Rider, *Magic and Impotence in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[52] Linne Mooney, 'Manuscript Evidence for the Use of Medieval Scientific and Utilitarian Texts', in *Interstices: Studies in Middle English and Anglo-Latin Texts in Honour of A.G. Rigg* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 184–202.

[53] Henry Hargreaves, 'Some Problems in Indexing Middle English Recipes', in *Middle English Prose: Essays on Bibliographic Problems*, ed.by A.S.G. Edwards and Derek Pearsall (New York: Garland Publishing, 1981), pp. 91–113 (p. 92).

readings on parts of practical writings from different genres, suggesting that those writings contain rhetorical, narrative and dialogic structures, and that they appeal to the imaginations of readers by asking them to envisage themselves doing something – an activity or craft – that they are not currently engaged in.[54] In a slightly later essay, Carrie Griffin focuses upon the narrative and literary qualities of a small selection of medical and culinary recipes and argues that we need to think about them being consumed in a variety of ways. She suggests that recipes sometimes functioned as 'wish-lists' which encouraged readers to imagine themselves making a costly dish or remedy that they could not afford.[55] Griffin also critiques the tendency of scholars and cataloguing systems to present recipe collections as coherent, organised and integral units; she foregrounds instead the collections' unpredictable and shifting 'thematic focus', which can 'confound the distinctions we might want to make between short, individual instructive pieces and larger collections'.[56] Because many vernacular remedy collections came into being though a patchwork process in which recipes were reproduced from longer works and oral exchanges, the collections are, as Griffin argues, rarely coherent in style and contents, even if they appear visually coherent on the manuscript page.[57] A central concern of my thesis is consequently to reappraise recipes' reputation as formulaic texts, by considering how this formulaic quality is disrupted by the sporadic and the whimsical.

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[54] Lisa H. Cooper, 'The Poetics of Practicality', in *Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English,* ed. by Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 491–505.

[55] Carrie Griffin, 'Reconsidering the Recipe: Materiality, Narrative and Text in Later Medieval Instructional Manuscripts and Collections', in *Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, 1350–1550: Packaging, Presentation and Consumption,* ed. by Emma Cayley and Susan Powell (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 135–149 (p. 148). See also Carrie Griffin, 'Instruction and Inspiration: Fifteenth-Century Codicological Recipes', *Exemplaria*, 30 (2018), 20–34, for discussion of how codicological recipes similarly stimulate the imagination.

[56] Griffin, 'Reconsidering the Recipe', p. 147.

[57]The recipes are often written in prose with a rubricated title beginning 'For ...'.

Finally, two essays by Julie Orlemanski have also exerted a formative influence on my research. In 'Jargon and the Matter of Medicine in Middle English', Orlemanski considers the 'peculiar musicality' and 'poetical energies' of 'a medical language turned aside from its healing purpose' because it is being satirised, or because it is incomprehensible to a non-specialist vernacular readership.[58] Her close-reading of the sonic and semantic properties of this jargon are another model for the way that I analyse sonic and semantic patterning in medical recipes that do or could serve a healing purpose, or which seem ambiguously poised between the serious and the parodic (see Chapter Seven). In her analysis of another practical genre, physiognomic manuals, Orlemanski also develops the helpful notion of *otiose practicality*: she contends that the manuals contain information that cannot actually be translated into practice, but is nonetheless presented as if it can be.[59] In this study, I often consider how the content of recipe collections and the forms that structure them at different levels, such as finding aids and similes, might be similarly otiose. This leads to a consideration of how a style of writing that foregrounds its own practicality might, *on account* of that foregrounding, possess an aesthetic appeal.

Although influenced by these essays, my thesis differs from or builds on their insights in three ways: first, instead of analysing several case studies or individual examples of many different practical genres, I have focused on the recurrence of specific features in one particular genre, in order to achieve a deeper understanding of how those features function there. Second, while my thesis follows Cooper and Griffin's lead in exploring how practical purposes might be fulfilled (or exceeded) through rhetorical

[58] Julie Orlemanski, 'Jargon and the Matter of Medicine in Middle English', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 42 (2012), 395–420 (p. 395).
[59] Julie Orlemanski, 'Physiognomy and Otiose Practicality', *Exemplaria*, 23 (2011), 194–218.

devices, it also explores how those devices might *fail* to fulfil, or might impede, the remedies' ostensible purpose of communicating and clarifying therapeutic knowledge. Here, I extend Orlemanski's focus on jargon to consider how other forms work against the communication of healing knowledge. Finally, I continue to scrutinise the relationship between poetic and practical writing by examining the similarities between the ways that medical writings and more consistently artful texts frame, theorise and use figures of thought and speech. But, rather than collapsing the boundary between the poetic and the practical, I argue that we should think about many of the texts' formal and linguistic features as participating in larger shared traditions of imaginative and aesthetic expression. These traditions were used in overlapping ways in all kinds of writing but there are often important differences in the way that they are understood and deployed and the effects that they might have had upon readers.

Recent work by Ethan Knapp, Paul Strohm, and Christopher Cannon is illuminating here: these critics have considered how discourses traditionally considered non-literary, such as bureaucratic documents and grammar textbooks, have shaped and been shaped by literary practices and traditions.[60] Medical writing, however, has received little of this attention. Much of the scholarship that exists focuses on a one-way, conscious importation of medical language into the writings of poets such as Chaucer.[61] There is little investigation of multi-directional influence or participation in

[60] Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 3–19; Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Christopher Cannon, *From Literacy to Literature: England, 1300–1400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[61] E.g., Tanya S. Lenz, *Dreams, Medicine and Literary Practice: Exploring the Western Literary Tradition through Chaucer* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); Elspeth Whitney, 'What's Wrong with the Pardoner? Complexion Theory, the Phlegmatic Man, and Effeminacy', *Chaucer Review,* 45 (2011), 357–89; Julie Singer, *Blindness and Therapy in Late Medieval French and Italian Poetry* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011).

larger shared traditions.[62] By tracing overlaps and conscious exchanges between medical writing and other modes or genres, this thesis will not only construct a more detailed idea of how readers would have responded to medical remedies: it will also help us to resituate the language and forms of more consistently artful texts within the rich, trans-generic network of connotation and association through which they may have been interpreted by their first readers. So, although this thesis is about medical writing, it offers new ways of reading some of our most canonical literary texts as well.

Key Terms

In order to achieve this dual purpose, terms such as *practical, poetic, aesthetic* and *useful* will be used frequently; some preliminary definitions are therefore required. When I describe aspects of a recipe as *practical* I am referring to the way in which those features help a reader translate the text's instructions into real world action. More specifically, I am thinking about the extent to which the texts function as cognitive aids that help readers to understand the action they need to perform upon their own or another's body by communicating, organising, clarifying and impressing information upon those readers' minds. The *practicality* of a text is different from its *efficacy:* we cannot know whether the remedies actually healed people. Even though modern experiments demonstrate that some ingredients– such as garlic, snail slime and spider's webs – possess healing properties, we cannot be sure that medieval practitioners used the same

[62] Exceptions include Joseph Ziegler, *Medicine and Religion c. 1300: The Case of Arnau de Vilanova* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 46–113; Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages,* translated by Rosemary Morris (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 91–205 which explores how metaphors representing the body in Henri de Mondeville's surgical texts indicate broader cultural and social attitudes; Star, '*Anima Carnis'*, 442–62, which analyses the confluence of medical, religious and literary languages in *The King of Tars.*

plant varieties or prepared them in the same conditions.[63] They may have supplemented the recipe with their own knowledge. As Pierre Bourdieu notes in his theory of human practice, 'the essential part of the *modus operandi* which defines [practical action] is transmitted in practice, in its practical state, without attaining the level of discourse'.[64] He goes on to add that 'even the most strictly ritualized exchanges, in which all the moments of the action, and their unfolding, are rigorously foreseen, have room for strategies'.[65] Humans are agents who can adapt whatever script they find before them.

Human agency also problematises the word *useful.* The adjective invites a judgment upon the recipes in relation to how well they fulfil a supposed goal. But what is that goal? Is it how well the texts function as cognitive aids, how well the information they contain heals a body, or how well they achieve another goal which writers and readers create for them? As David Pye notes in his theory of design, we decide upon the function of something 'arbitrarily'.[66] Consequently, it is a mistake to '[talk] about function as though it were something objective: something of which it could be said that it belonged to a thing'.[67] This thesis will suggest that writers and readers understood recipes to have multiple functions. For instance, recipes could be cultural status symbols or imaginative aids: they enabled readers to imagine themselves in new states of health or wealth, or in new situations, some of which were taboo. Remedies were also useful imaginative stimulants to writers of more literary and fantastical texts: those writers

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[63] Mount, *Dragon's Blood,* pp. 104–16.
[64] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 87. On tacit knowledge, see also Gilbert Ryle, 'Knowing How and Knowing That: The Presidential Address', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* 46 (1945–46), 1–16.
[65] Bourdieu, *Outline,* p. 15.
[66] David Pye, *The Nature and Aesthetics of Design: A Design Handbook* (London: Herbert Press, 1978), p. 13.
[67] Pye, *Nature and Aesthetics*, p. 11.

borrowed language and formal structures from recipes in order to create new scenarios within their narratives.[68] But recipes not only stimulated the imagination: they sometimes also appear as the product of it. As is explained in Chapter Seven, medieval psychology attributed to the imagination the ability to combine mental impressions to produce new forms.[69] Recipe collections which combine textual styles, words, sounds and things in new ways can, then, also be considered imaginative.

The term *poetic* is difficult to define because, in both modern and Middle English, it is associated with a variety of subjects, modes, forms, and reader experiences. As Glending Olson and Jenni Nuttall have demonstrated, one strand of medieval thought distinguished between *poets* and *makers*: the first term, along with the nouns *poetrie* or *poesie*, did not designate writers of verse (as it does now) but was often reserved for classical or humanistic writers who wrote about classical subject matter in a metaphorical and allegorical style and for a philosophical, moral, or historical truth-telling purpose. On the other hand, *makers,* who were often vernacular writers, were associated less with specific content and considered more as a kind of craftsmen, who produced artefacts of formal complexity.[70] These artefacts could serve moral or philosophical purposes, but it was not a prerequisite. Concerned with the shaping of language rather than abstract intellectual pursuits, the term *maker* was often perceived

[68] On Lydgate's use of recipe discourse, for example, see Lisa Cooper, 'Recipes for the Realm: John Lydgate's "Soteltes" and *The Debate of the Horse, Goose and Sheep*', in *Essays on Aesthetics and Medieval Literature in Honour of Howell Chickering,* ed. by John M. Hill, Bonnie Wheeler and R.F. Yeager (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2014), pp. 194–214.

[69] See Ch. 7. fns 28–30.

[70] Glending Olson, 'Making and Poetry in the Age of Chaucer', *Comparative Literature,* 31 (1979), 272–90; Jenni Nuttall, 'Poesie and Poetrie', paper presented at Middle English Literary Theory Workshop: Keywords and Methodologies, Centre for Early Modern and Medieval Studies at the University of Sussex, 16 June 2016, pp. 1–5, accessed online at <http://stylisticienne.com/middle-english-literary-theory/> [accessed 28/02/2018].

as the less lofty of the two, but it created a connection – which could be positive as well as pejorative – between literary writers and urban artisans.[71]

The distinction between craftsmen and poets could, however, blur. For one thing, Latin handbooks known as *artes poetriae* were used in grammar schools to teach boys how to compose ornate verse and prose; they presented ornate composition as a craft that could be learnt. These treatises contained their own definitions of the poetic. In an early manual, the *Ars versificatoria* (c. 1175), Matthew of Vendôme claimed that poetry must be beautiful in the meaning it communicates, in the ornamentation of language and in the manner in which it is spoken.[72] Accordingly, manuals such as this teach the grammar school reader how to structure his thoughts into text, how to memorise and perform that text and, in between, how to achieve different effects and affects by embellishing his verse or prose with figures of thought and speech. Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova*, which was the most influential handbook in the late Middle Ages, follows a similar structure, teaching a reader how to amplify and abbreviate their material through rhetorical devices.[73] As James Jerome Murphy notes, most of the precepts and figures listed in the *Poetria nova* are repeated in Geoffrey's later treatise on prose composition, suggesting that he thought both modes could be similarly ornate.[74] The emphasis in the *artes poetriae* was not, then, just upon treating classical matter in a metaphorical way; instead, they offer guidance on how to use a wide range

[71] See Lisa Cooper, A*rtisans and Narrative Craft* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[72] *Les arts poétiques du XII^e^ et du XIII^e^ siècle: Recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du moyen âge,* ed. by Edmond Faral (Paris: É Champion, 1924), p. 153: 'Versus enim aut contrahit elegantiam ex venustate interioris sententiae, aut ex superficiali ornatu verborum, aut ex modo dicendi'.
[73] Faral*,* ed., *Les arts poétiques,* pp. 203–20, lines 203–736.
[74] James Jerome Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 172.

of figurative language to produce eloquent prose or verse compositions on any subject matter.[75]

Similar handbooks existed instructing adult readers on how to compose sermons (*artes praedicandi)* and letters (*artes dictaminis).* Each type of writing was associated with a specific kind of craft or technique (*ars*). There are parallels here with modern formalist theories of literary language: defining literary language as a special, enhanced or deviant kind of language, these theories have often faced problems when trying to establish what ordinary language is. As Jonathan Culler notes, the approach has 'led not to a satisfactory account of literature but to an often extremely productive identification of literariness in other cultural phenomena – from historical narratives and Freudian case histories to advertising slogans'.[76] Was there an analogous situation in the late Middle Ages where different kinds of writing – letters, sermons, legal documents, and poetic compositions – were each associated with a distinctive kind of literary crafting? The structure and style of most remedies is exemplified by this cure for back pain:

> For man þat haþ yuel in his bakke. Take ache and egremoigne
> and mousere and stamp hem wel togeder and do þer too
> barowe grece and eisel and frye hem wel and make a plastre
> and ale hot as he may suffre leye hit to þe seke bakke[77]

[75] On the lack of restriction in subject matter, see James Jerome Murphy, 'The Arts of Poetry and Prose', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume II: The Middle Ages*, ed. by Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) pp. 42–67 (pp. 44, 50–51, 52, 53, 60, 62–63).
[76] Jonathan Culler, *The Literary in Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 25.
[77] CUL, MS Dd. 6.29, f. 39r.

Imperatives, lists and ordered stages of action are characteristic of recipes.[78] But did medieval writers consider these features part of a particular style? Until the mid-fifteenth century, the word *stile* was most frequently used in discussions, probably originating in the pseudo-Ciceronian text *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, about three different modes of rhetoric: the grand, middle, and plain styles.[79] It is therefore intertwined with ideas about decorum and the rhetorical imperative to adapt one's language use to one's audience. One can see a similar thing in the *artes poetriae, praedicandi,* and *dictaminis* which were of course all products of long rhetorical and grammatical traditions: although they establish precepts for particular types of composition, they constantly present the reader with choices and variations. For instance, the reader must decide to amplify or abbreviate his material. In contrast, the conventional form and mode of remedies like this one for back pain seem to offer little room for stylistic adaptation. These remedies might be more productively compared to formularies of letters and legal documents: these contained fully fleshed-out exemplars into which readers simply inserted their names and details when copying.[80] Likewise, different ailments and ingredients were inserted into the standard recipe framework. Of course, such formulae could be modified, but they do not invite the same variety of choices or the rhetorical adaptation that the *artes* do.

[78] For a linguistic study of these features, see Irma Taavitsainen, 'Middle English Recipes: Genre Characteristics, Text Type Features and Underlying Traditions of Writing', *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, 2 (2001), 85–113.

[79] MED, *stile*, n. 2, entry (c). Maura Nolan, 'The Invention of Style', biennial lecture presented at the New Chaucer Society Congress, University of Toronto, 14 July 2018, recently demonstrated that John Lydgate's writings mark a new way in the middle of the fifteenth century of using the word *stile* to describe the style of a particular writer.

[80] Malcolm Richardson, 'The *Ars dictaminis*, the Formulary, and Medieval Epistolary Practice', in *Letter Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. by Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South California Press, 2007), pp. 52–66.

We should, then, be cautious about using the word *style* when discussing the recipes in their most predictable and conventional form. Sometimes, though, recipes do display evidence of stylistic crafting, of having been shaped and phrased with a particular purpose or audience in mind: they might diverge from the formulae on account of their excessive use of superlative language, unusual syntactic patterning or notable sound play. Often, though, this just occurs in one recipe in a collection and the shift might be the result of it deriving from a different source. We can think, then, in terms of stylistic fragments. Some of these fragments might share features with poetic writings, but it is precisely because the collections are fragmented that they cannot themselves be poetic: Latin rhetorical theorists and the authors of the *artes poetriae* expected the principles they taught to be applied to the *entirety* of a composition.[81] So, rather than anachronistically describing the recipes as 'poetic', I shall aim to show how these different modes of writing overlapped and interacted.

Aesthetic, the final term requiring explanation, is both easier and harder to define than *poetic*: on the one hand, it did not exist in the Middle Ages and is therefore not confused by multiple contemporary definitions. But this means that any definition risks retrospectively creating a category of experience that was not recognised or distinguished in the same way previously. Furthermore, because of Kantian theories of the aesthetic, the word is often associated with a disinterested appreciation of the beauty of art and nature that is entirely removed from social and moral concerns.[82] As a result, commentators upon the Middle Ages have been reluctant to affirm that people

[81] For a statement in the *Poetria nova* to this effect, see Faral, ed., *Les arts poétiques,* p. 199, lines 60–70. On the concept of consistent *varietas* in Latin rhetorical theory see Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 135–64.
[82] Peggy Knapp, C*haucerian Aesthetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 4–10.

had experiences in any way similar to those recognised by the modern term: underpinning this reluctance is the view that in devoutly Christian societies like medieval England, any sensual or cognitive pleasure produced by a work of art was not appreciated in itself but only as a means to communicate higher moral and devotional truths.

In recent decades, this view has been questioned. Glending Olson has argued that, despite the prevalence of the moral attitude to art, 'literature for pleasure rather than profit was acknowledged, if not venerated, in the Middle Ages.'[83] More recently, Peggy Knapp has explored the pleasures produced by Chaucer's writings, arguing that a central part of their appeal as artworks is the way in which Chaucer brings ideas and concepts into unresolved play, never promoting fixed moral messages, but playfully 'elud[ing] the certainties of conceptual thought'.[84] Chaucer's technique suggests an authorial pleasure in the balance, opposition and tension of ideas, which in turn implies that the value of art was considered to reside in more than just its content.

In the Aristotelian philosophy inherited by the Middle Ages, the senses were, of course, integral to knowledge formation: without sense impressions, mental images could not be produced in the imagination, retained in the memory or abstracted by reason.[85] As Vincent Gillespie has shown, it was this psychological theory that justified the intense sensual appeals of literature and informed the poetic theory and practice of writers such as Roger Bacon, Dante, John Lydgate, and Stephen Hawes.[86] However, the

[83] Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 31.
[84] Knapp, C*haucerian Aesthetics*, pp. 2–3.
[85] Vincent Gillespie, 'The Senses in Literature: The Textures of Perception', in *A Cultural History of the Senses,* ed. by Richard Newhauser (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 153–73 (pp. 153–55, 166–67).
[86] Gillespie, 'The Senses', pp. 164–66, 172.

fact that the sensual pleasures produced by art were considered the first step towards higher knowledge did not always lead to them being subsequently devalued, as Mary Carruthers has demonstrated. Carruthers discusses Abbot Suger's account of the way in which the beautiful and sensually stimulating architecture of his church draws him into contemplation of God *through* a transferral of the material to the immaterial.[87] She also picks out the vibrant sensory detail in the Old English poem, *The Dream of the Rood*, arguing that it 'produces in us', that is, in the reader, 'a variously sensory complex aesthetic experience that, *through its enacted stages*, occasions "warm" belief, confidence, and joy'.[88] Carruthers' account not only stresses the crucial rhetorical function that the pleasant sensory detail performs by producing '"warm" belief', but also emphasises that, for this poet and his readers, such pleasure could not be retrospectively forgotten or devalued after 'belief' was attained: just as Abbot Suger looks with and through the church architecture to see God, this sensory detail, Carruthers argues, is the 'lens' through which the reader looks to see the crucifixion.[89] The detail, and the pleasure it produces, are engrained into the experience of achieving belief and are consequently a fundamental part of the belief itself.[90] In this thesis, I follow the above critics by defining aesthetic experience as the pleasing cognitive and sensual effects produced by crafted structures and by suggesting that these effects were integral, in a variety of ways, to the communication of healing knowledge.

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[87] Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*, pp. 39–41.
[88] Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*, p. 39, italics mine.
[89] Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*, p. 40.
[90] This is, of course, similar to Thomas Aquinas's claim that thinking is always material in part, because the intellect is dependent on mental images created from sense impressions: See E. Ruth Harvey, *The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1975), p. 58 and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Volume XII*, ed. by Paul T. Turbin (Blackfriars: Aquinas Institute, 1968), 1a.86.6.

Approach

In order to understand how recipes work, then, this thesis close-reads the aesthetic effects and practical functions of the remedies' language and formal components, while remaining sensitive to their historical contexts: the people who wrote and read them, contemporary medical theory, and the broader linguistic networks of which they were a part. Form can include a list, a quire structure, or a social network; Caroline Levine's self-avowedly capacious definition of form as any 'ordering, patterning, or shaping' is consequently apt.[91] I argue that the recipes' multiple uses, roles and effects can only be illuminated by a pluralistic approach that combines formalist techniques with codicology and the history of medicine.[92]

The thesis is structured as follows. An introductory chapter explores the types of people who engaged with medical knowledge and the way recipes portray them. Then, Chapter Two uses codicological evidence, such as scribal organisation and reader annotation, to suggest that some writers and readers derived pleasure, pride or satisfaction from the acts of producing, possessing and reading healing texts rather than using them. The next two chapters explore – first in verse (Chapter Three) and then in prose (Chapter Four) – the remedies' formal, phonetic, and linguistic features (such as rhyme, similes, puns and lists) considering the ways that they fulfil, impede or overshadow the texts' practical purpose. In this section, I also compare the way in which

[91] Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 3.

[92] Models are Arthur Bahr and Alexandra Gillespie, 'Medieval English Manuscripts: Form, Aesthetics, and the Literary Text', *Chaucer Review*, 47 (2013), 346–60; Christopher Cannon, 'Form', in Strohm, ed., *Twenty-First Century Approaches,* pp. 177–90; Helen Marshall and Peter Buchanan, 'New Formalism and the Forms of Middle English Literary Texts', *Literature Compass,* 8 (2011), 164–72. This pluralism is often associated with a certain type of renewed interest in form: see Marjorie Levinson, 'What is New Formalism?', *PMLA,* 122 (2007), 558–69 (p. 561).

the same words and devices work in other kinds of writing, in order to develop a more precise understanding of their interconnectedness. The last three chapters focus more specifically upon thematic connections between recipes and other text-types. In Chapters Five and Six, recurring motifs and similar attitudes to time, wonder and transgression suggest reciprocal imaginative exchanges between remedies, romances and fabliaux. Chapter Seven examines unexpected parallels between serious and parodic remedies, arguing that this blurred boundary creates interpretive challenges for readers. In these final three chapters in particular, I hope to draw attention to an interpretive element overlooked in the recipes: the texts do not just contain instructions that are to be translated into real-world referents and actions; they can also bring words, forms, and ideas into play with one another, defying straightforward interpretation and 'elud[ing] the certainties of conceptual thought' as resolutely as literary texts.[93]

[93] Knapp, *Chaucerian Aesthetics* pp. 2–3.

Identity and Obscurity:

Writers and Readers of Vernacular Remedy Collections

A recipe for *Gratia Dei* used by Lady Beauchamp, another associated with the Earl of Hereford, and a third used in the infirmary of St. Mary's Priory, Kenilworth: these recipes for healing salves frequently appear together in collections.[1] Claims such as these, which assert that cures have been invented, recommended or used by specific people, invite readers to reflect upon the recipes' provenance and circulation. This explains why some scholars have focused on identifying the people who wrote and read remedy collections and other medical texts, as well as the networks that connected them.[2] Such studies are testament to the results that skilful prosopographical and codicological research can yield.

Understanding who engaged with remedy collections is integral to one of the broader aims of this thesis: understanding how and why they did so. The first half of this chapter is consequently dedicated to investigating the types of people who composed and owned several collections important to my research. This investigation, however, is

[1] E.g., BodL, MS Ashmole 1477, ff. 30r–31v; BL, MS Additional 33996, ff. 119v–21v (in the final recipe the infirmary's location is not specified); BL, MS Sloane 468, ff. 71r–74r; WT, MS Wellcome 542, ff. 17v–18v; TCC, MS O.1.13, ff. 57v–58v; HEHL, HM 58, ff. 52v–53r. For a list of twenty-two texts of the remedy book in BL, MS Additional 33996 (many of which contain these attributions) see Keiser, *Manual,* p. 3839 and George Keiser, 'Verse Introductions to Middle English Medical Treatises', *English Studies,* 84 (2003), 301–17 (p. 302, fn 6).
Given that the earliest surviving manuscripts with this attribution date to the late fourteenth century, the last Lady Beauchamp this could refer to is probably Margaret Ferrers (d. 1407), the wife of the twelfth Earl of Warwick. It is not clear who the Earl of Hereford is. In some manuscripts, he is referred to as a surgeon as well, but I have found no record of an Earl of Hereford practising medicine formally.

[2] E.g., Jones, 'Discourse Communities', pp. 23–36; Voigts, 'The "Sloane Group"', 26–57; Monica Green, 'The Possibilities of Literacy and the Limits of Reading: Women and the Gendering of Medical Literacy', in *Women's Healthcare in the Medieval West* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 1–76; Murray Jones, 'Medicine and Science', pp. 435–39, 445–47.

not sufficient by itself. Although some readers and owners of recipe collections may have known the immediate sources of their collections (where it was copied and which exemplar was used), others probably did not; they may well have inherited their remedy book from someone else. Furthermore, most would not know the original and varied sources – English, Latin, Arabic and Greek – of the remedies in their manuscripts.

In a recent corpus-based study of alchemical verse, Anke Timmermann has challenged prevailing critical narratives of alchemy, which are usually 'populated with known individuals'. Instead, she puts 'an untitled, authorless and often textually unstable body of vernacular recipes centre stage' and investigates how authority is cultivated within those texts.[3] When considering medical recipes, we also need to be more alert to the possibility that opaqueness, obscurity and uncertainty about the texts' provenance and circulation were as much a part of the medieval reading experience as they are of ours. This chapter examines scribal decisions and reader annotations which foreground that aspect of the recipes and shows that, though some readers may have been troubled by it, others did not consider obscurity incompatible with authority.

In other recipes, this absence of clear information about the texts' provenance seems to have stimulated the imagination: when things are uncertain, more can be invented. Conversely, even when the recipes provide credible accounts of their transmission, those accounts function rhetorically. It is important, therefore, to move beyond considering the historical significance of attributions in recipes to reflect upon how those attributions are expressed and what they may have made readers think and feel.

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[3] Anke Timmermann, *Verse and Transmutation: A Corpus of Middle English Alchemical Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 5, 2.

Identities

As explained in the introduction, the fifteenth-century witnessed an 'information revolution' when the number of vernacular medical manuscripts in England increased by an unprecedented amount. However, little documentary evidence survives about the types of people who owned these vernacular collections. As Susan Cavanaugh's *Study of Books Privately Owned in England 1300–1450* shows, in the later medieval period, the types of people who tended to record medical books in their wills were still members of universities and religious houses. Furthermore, the books they recorded were often Latin texts by known canonical authorities such as Galen.[4] These are also the kind of medical books typically named in the library inventories of academic institutions, guilds and hospitals.[5]

Wills and inventories therefore rarely reveal information about readers other than male scholars. For example, little evidence exists concerning female ownership of medical texts in Latin or English. Monica Green lists only ten late medieval women in England known to have owned medical writings.[6] She also translates a fifteenth-century Dutch note listing some of the English books owned by the Dutch noblewoman Jacqueline of Hainault (d. 1436) at her death. The note reads: 'Dair lagen zess Engelsshe boecken, die van ouden ystorien, ende oie sommygen van medicijnen in helden' (left

[4] E.g., Susan Cavanaugh, *A Study of Books Privately Owned in England 1300–1450,* 2 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1980), I, 42, 121, 128.
[5] E.g., the inventory of medical books in All Souls College, Oxford in 1443 in *The University and College Libraries of Oxford: Volume I,* ed. by Rodney M. Thomson, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 16 (London: The British Library, 2015), pp. 101–5, which includes texts and translations by Rhazes, Avicenna, Constantine the African, Gilbertus Anglicus and John of Gaddesden and commentaries on Galen's works. For similar examples from guilds and hospitals, see *Hospitals, Towns and the Professions,* ed. by Nigel Ramsay and James M.W. Willoughby, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 14 (London: The British Library, 2009), pp. 107, 163, 168.
[6] Green, 'The Possibilities of Literacy', pp. 49–51. On female ownership of gynaecological texts, see Monica H. Green, 'Obstetrical and Gynaecological Texts in Middle English', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 14 (1992), 53–88 (pp. 58–59).

behind were six English books, some of ancient history, some containing medicine').[7] After fleeing to the English court in 1421, Jacqueline married Humphrey Duke of Gloucester in 1422 or 1423. Gloucester was a great patron of literary and scientific writing and one of those in his favour was Gilbert Kymer, a university-qualified doctor of medicine who commissioned the copying of many medical works. This might explain why Jacqueline possessed a medical book. Indeed, although the numbers of women owning medical books was undoubtedly far smaller than the number of men, it may not have been *quite* as abnormal as wills and inventories suggest: as Green acknowledges, women could have read or listened to texts owned by their husbands being read aloud – just as Chaucer's Wife of Bath, portrayed as a well-educated lay woman, becomes familiar with Jankyn's compilation of misogynistic writings through his oral performances.[8] Some educated women may well have possessed sufficient literacy to decode the simple imperatives of recipes, even if they could not engage with more densely theoretical works.

Wills distort the diversity of late medieval book ownership in another respect too: the wills of those outside of university and monastic environments often prioritise devotional texts over others. While primers, breviaries and books of hours are normally named in wills, other kinds of text (especially in the wills of non-academic, middle-class craftsman) are often referred to vaguely. For instance, the will of the fourteenth-century London goldsmith William de Burton includes an unnamed book, while the will of John Cadeby, fifteenth-century mason of Yorkshire, mentions 'vj Englisch bokys'.[9] These

[7] Transcribed in Cavanaugh, *A Study of Books Privately Owned*, I, p. 465. Translation from Green, 'The Possibilities of Literacy', p. 55.
[8] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Tale,* in *Riverside,* lines 669–85.
[9] Cavanaugh, *A Study of Books Privately Owned*, I, pp. 157, 158 respectively.

vernacular books may well have contained useful household knowledge, such as culinary and medical recipes. The fact that they are not described in detail probably reflects the fact that, though useful in *this* world, their contents would not help an individual's bid for a place in the next.

Despite this bias, there is some documentary evidence which suggests that, in the later Middle Ages, vernacular medical texts were not only read by university-educated physicians, but also by people outside academic and monastic institutions. This diversity seems to have been fuelled by rising levels of literacy among non-scholastic, non-aristocratic members of the laity, such as merchants and urban craftsmen.[10] For instance, one of the medical books owned by Jacqueline of Hainault was sold eight years after her death to a travelling English merchant.[11] Furthermore, Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 176/97 is a manuscript containing Middle English medical treatises translated from canonical Latin texts. As Peter Murray Jones points out, the manuscript begins with a prologue claiming that the texts were translated by a clerk named Austin for Thomas Plawdon, citizen and barber of London.[12] Barbers were not university educated; instead, like surgeons, they were trained through guild-organised apprenticeships. Although they were not usually trained to carry out as complex procedures as surgeons, barbers often practised bloodletting and more basic operations.[13] The manuscript therefore suggests that there was a demand for medical texts – including those of a learned, theoretical kind – among vernacular readers with humbler medical training. Although Plawdon may not have had the opportunity to apply

[10] See Introduction, fn. 24.
[11] Green, 'The Possibilities of Literacy', p. 55.
[12] Murray Jones, 'Medicine and Science', p. 435.
[13] Murray Jones, 'Medicine and Science', p. 435.

the knowledge he could acquire from the manuscript, he was still interested in owning it.

It was not just those with a professional interest in medicine who copied or purchased medical texts. Alongside romances and devotional writings, Robert Thornton, a member of the Yorkshire landed gentry, copied an herbal and the English recipe collection commonly known by its Latin title *Liber de diversis medicinis*.[14] He may have copied the recipes so that members of his household could heal one another, because he was intellectually interested, or for a combination of these reasons. Similarly, the French will of the Earl of Warwick, Guy de Beauchamp (d. 1315), lists forty volumes to be donated to Bordesley Abbey, among which are romances, saints' lives, and 'un livere de phisik, e de Surgie'.[15] Unfortunately, the language of the medical book is not stated. Nevertheless, the fact that nobles, dukes' wives, members of the gentry, barbers, and university physicians all owned these texts, suggests a relatively diverse interest in written medical knowledge amongst the literate upper classes.

Manuscript Evidence of Ownership

Many vernacular remedy collections are anonymous or offer names of owners and readers for which no biographical information survives. Nevertheless, frequently one can speculate about the intellectual and social milieu of writers and intended readers from evidence *within* the manuscripts themselves. These clues add more colour to the brief

[14]On Thornton's copying, see Julie Orlemanski, 'Thornton's Remedies and the Practises of Medical Reading', in *Robert Thornton and his Books: Essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton Manuscripts*, ed. by Susanna Greer Fein and Michael Johnston (York: York Medieval Press, 2014), pp. 235–57. For an edition of the manuscript, see Ogden, ed., *"Liber de diversis medicinis".*

[15] Cavanaugh, *A Study of Books Privately Owned*, I, pp. 76–79.

entries in wills. Consider the example of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1438. This is a manuscript made up of multiple remedy collections and medical texts, many of which originally seem to have existed independently. In one quire, surgical recipes for wounds, broken bones and other external injuries have been copied by a fifteenth-century hand under the title *Sururgia*.[16] This was possibly 'Nicholas Neesbett', whose name is written at the top of the collection. Although this name is not recorded in Talbot and Hammond's register of medical practitioners in medieval England, several notes in the collection suggest that the scribe practised surgery and that he copied the collection with the intention of sending it to another practitioner. After a recipe for an ointment for sores, he writes:

> I culd haue wryttyn ȝow oyntmentes þat had ben more costly. bot þai ere noȝt for a pure man . bot he schall be reȝt a costly oyntment . bott þise schall wyrke als wele as it. for I haue asayd and þerfore drede ȝow noȝt to wyrke with þam whore any grevos fester or cankyre or mormall is for þai wyl noȝt dyssafe ȝow on warandyse[17]
>
> [*be reȝt* =be given?[18]; *asayd* = tested; *fester* = fistula; *cankyre* = ulcer or cancerous swelling; *mormall* = scabbed ulcer; *dyssafe* = prove unreliable; *on warandyse* = it is guaranteed]

The scribe claims that he has 'asayd' ('tried') the cures himself and that they will not fail the addressee. Both seem to be practising medicine.

It is difficult, though, to know what kind of formal medical training (if any) these individuals had. They may have been formally trained through apprenticeships, or they

[16] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, pp. 57–73.
[17] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, pp. 64–65.
[18] This could be a passive form of *MED, rechen,* entry 4(a), meaning to hand sth. to sb. But that would require the ointment, not the poor man, to be the thing that is 'be reȝt'. The exact sense, then, is unclear, but context suggests that the general meaning is to 'be given' or 'to request'.

may have been self-taught through medical writings. They may only have used their remedies within their households, or within the local community in an ad-hoc way. There are a few clues, though, that the addressee had a more clearly defined role in the community. Firstly, he is repeatedly associated with the treatment of the poor. He may have been of limited means himself, or he may have dispensed medical treatments at charitable prices. As Carole Rawcliffe notes, treatment of the poor for free or at reduced cost was often recommended in medical texts and evidence suggests that it was occasionally put into practice.[19] The addressee of this collection could have been one such practitioner: the scribe writes that he has refrained from writing ointments that are 'noȝt for a pure man' (see above quotation). Secondly, at the end of another recipe of 'liȝt cost', the scribe writes 'þis is a gude pure man salfe. þof al þai be lytyl of price kepe þam priuay to ȝour selfe and sett neuer þe les by þam'.[20] The scribe here instructs his addressee to keep the low-cost ointments a secret. This emphasis upon secrecy is perhaps anothe indicator that the addressee was an active practitioner, competing in a broader social arena with other medics.

The intimate exchange of knowledge to which this collection testifies can be given some geographical co-ordinates. The *Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English* links the collection's lexical and orthographical features to Lincolnshire, suggesting that the scribe lived there or had lived there previously.[21] A clue to the location of the addressee is provided by the following note, which the scribe copies after a set of instructions for staunching blood:

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[19] Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society,* pp. 143–44.
[20] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, pp. 65–66.
[21] M. Benskin and others, *An Electronic Version of A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English,* accessed online at< http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme_frames.html>[accessed 2/04/2018]. The collection comprises the *Atlas*'s linguistic profile 908.

> I vyse to be at ȝow my selfe als sone as I may haue space and I schal bryng ȝow mo stanschars[22] þan þ[?][23] þat er more strange . And I pray ȝow to luke agayn I cum how þat þe bukes may be getyn þat þe parson had at selby for two quarters whete . þe parson ȝe sade dwelt a lytyl fro þe nonnys of Appylton and be þe rude I schall dysseruye it to ȝow when I cum.[24]
>
> [*vyse* = intend; *stanschars* = recipes for staunching blood or ink horns; *nonnys of Appylton* = nuns of Appleton; *disseruye* = repay]

The scribe asks the addressee to acquire multiple books (of unknown nature) from a parson in Selby, which suggests that the addressee lives somewhere near the North Yorkshire town. The scribe seems to have imagined this textual exchange as an ongoing one. Although the recipes in the collection are all copied on one quire, which suggests that they were sent and received at the same time, they are copied with different inks and nibs.[25] This indicates that they were written in several stints. Furthermore, the scribe frames the recipes he sends as an instalment which might be supplemented with more recipes in the future. After a series of recipes for ointments, he writes:

> Me mystyrs noȝt to sett ȝow in powders for corvasyse[26] for þe oyntmentes aforesayd er gude enawgh for syche maters and þerfore I wryte none to ȝow at þis tyme.[27]

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[22] *Stanchars* may describe medicines that staunch blood (though that meaning is not listed in the *MED*). Alternatively, it may mean ink horns (*MED*, n., *stauncher):* the preceding recipe to stanch blood (BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 61) claims that egg white is used to make red ink. Perhaps this prompted the scribe to add the note about ink horns.

[23] The page is cropped here, making the word unreadable.

[24] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 61.

[25] The quire extends from BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, pp. 57–80. Originally composed of twelve leaves, a page has been torn out between pp. 62 and 63. A parchment page containing a diagram of a vein man has also been inserted between pp. 76 and 79.

[26] This is an unusual spelling of *corrosif* ('corrosive', a noun and adjective) which is not listed in the *MED* or Juhani Norri, *Dictionary of Medical Vocabulary in English, 1375–1550: Body Parts, Sicknesses, Instruments and Medicinal Preparations* (London: Routledge, 2016). However, the word's meaning is confirmed by a recipe on BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 64 for 'anoþer oyntment þat is coruasy', which involves removing dead flesh, a typical property of corrosives. See *MED*, *corrosif,* adj. & n., entry 2 (a), (b).

[27] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 68.

> [*me mystyrs noȝt* = there is no need for me; *powders for corvasyse* = powders with corrosive properties].

The phrase 'at þis tyme' anticipates a future 'tyme' when the scribe *will* write again with more instructions. This packaging of the recipes parallels the nineteenth- and twentieth-century delivery of literary texts through serials or periodicals; the suspense and anticipation generated by the deferred conclusions of those writings may also have been produced by the simultaneous withholding and promising of recipes in this note. However, while periodicals were communal and public, this collection testifies to a private exchange and shows how recipes could be used to form and maintain personal or professional relationships. It also testifies to the diverse types of medical writer and reader in the fifteenth century: the untheoretical, informal style and surgical emphasis of the recipes suggests that the scribe and his addressee were not university-trained; if trained, they – like the barber Thomas Plawdon – would have been trained through a guild-based apprenticeship. The vernacular collection is therefore another illustration of the way in which medical texts moved beyond universities and religious houses. What is more, the scribe seems to have taken pride in this vernacular transmission of healing knowledge: not only does he appear to have written his name proudly at the start of the collection, but he also begins two of the pages with a large initial 'A', one with a face and one with similar amateurish decoration.[28] In each instance, this begins the line 'At þe begynnyng'. This opening has obvious biblical echoes but it also gives the recipe collection, in which recipes are roughly grouped into similar types, the semblance of having a logical order like that of longer, more theoretical writings. For example, a

[28] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, pp. 57, 59.

fifteenth-century Middle English translation of a surgical treatise by the university-educated practitioner Guy de Chauliac opens with summaries of each chapter, all of which start 'Here bygynneþ'.[29]

Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1443 also demonstrates how medical manuscripts blurred boundaries between university-educated and lay readers but it does so through different stylistic features. In this manuscript, a single fifteenth-century hand has copied the following texts: two large recipe collections, one with a greater surgical emphasis than the other; a text explaining the function of decimal places; *The Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy*, which contains information about human complexions and celestial influences upon them; an English version of the Latin herbal *Circa instans*; a Latin plague tract by John of Burgundy as well as an English translation, and an additional note on treating the plague.[30] This selection is already revealing. *The Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy* is a vernacular encyclopaedic text which was owned, read, and used by people from different social and intellectual circles.[31] Similarly, the herbal *Circa Instans,* which, in its original Latin form, is believed to have been written by a Salernitan physician, was translated into multiple vernaculars. Furthermore, it survives in over two hundred manuscripts and has attracted critical comment for its user-friendliness and accessibility to a broad, non-specialist audience.[32] These texts would, then, have appealed to those both inside and outside of the

[29] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac,* ed. by Margaret Sinclair Ogden, EETS os 265 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 14–26.
[30] For the contents, see *A Handlist of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Prose in the Ashmole Collection*, *Bodleian Library,* ed. by L.M. Eldredge (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), pp. 72–74.
[31] *The Middle English Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy: A Parallel Text Edition: Edited from London, British Library, MS Sloane 2453 with a Parallel Text from New York, Columbia University, MS Plimpton 260,* ed. by Carrie Griffin (Heidelberg: Winter, 2013), pp. lv–lxv.
[32] Iolanda Ventura, ''Il "Circa instans" attribuito a Platearius: trasmissione manoscritta, redazioni, criteri di costruzione di un'edizione critica', *Revue d'Histoire des Textes*, 10 (2015), 249–362.

universities, perhaps offering the former an introduction to astronomical, herbal and therapeutic practice and the latter an easily accessible summary. The fact that John of Burgundy's plague tract is copied in Latin and English might also suggest that the individual who selected the texts wished to make the tract accessible both to those who could and to those who could not read Latin.

Evidence in the two remedy collections also brings us a step closer to their author, who may have been the same person who compiled and copied the whole manuscript. Like Nicholas Neesbitt, the author seems to have been a medical practitioner. In the first of the medical treatises, he frequently claims that he has proved the efficacy of cures: after a remedy for a sore on the eye it is written, 'þus curyd y a gentil woman of dyuers euelis in eyne'.[33] In other remedies in the collection, his agency is highlighted even more through rubricated phrases: **'And truly y haue** preuyd [...] **And soþely y haue** preuyd [...]'.[34] These first-person constructions recall the beginning of the surgical treatise *Fistula in ano* by the fourteenth-century surgeon John of Arderne. It opens with a list of all the individuals (many of whom were aristocratic) upon whom Arderne has proved his cure: in a fifteenth-century English translation, this reads: 'I, Iohn of Arderne [...] helid many men of fistula in ano'.[35] Arderne and the author of the remedy collection do not, however, just present themselves as practitioners but as scholars too.[36] Like Arderne, the author of the cures in MS Ashmole 1443 often makes precise references to learned texts and authorities, and also distinguishes between cures

[33] BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, pp. 209–10. For further discussion and bibliography on efficacy phrases, see p. 53.
[34] BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 210. Such pointed rubrication is potential evidence that the original author of these collections and the scribe of the current manuscript were one.
[35] *TFA,* pp. 1–2. For a copy of the Latin text, see BodL, MS Ashmole 1434, f. 1r. On the range of patients, Arderne claims to treat, see Marion Turner, 'Thomas Usk and John Arderne', *Chaucer Review*, 47 (2012), 95–105.
[36] E.g., *TFA,* p. 3.

that work through empirical means rather than established medical theories: the former could only be proven through demonstration and experience whilst the latter could be explained through the humoral principles established by authorities such as Galen.[37] The relative merits of experience and authority were a prominent topic of intellectual debate in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. However, university-trained medical practitioners were by no means uniformly opposed to empirical remedies: Galen himself insisted upon the importance of combining reason with observation, and theory with experience, and university-educated physicians such as John of Gaddesden (d. 1348/9) frequently included empirical remedies and charms in their medical writings.[38]

The author of the remedies in MS Ashmole 1443 may also have been personally associated with a university medical faculty. In the second remedy collection, which contains surgical remedies for wounds and external injuries, he includes phrases such as 'myne mastir put þer to [...] and fond hit gode' and 'as old doctors of þis faculte seyen'.[39] *Mastir* could refer to a master craftsman or head of a guild, which would be in keeping with the apprenticeship training surgeons received. However, it could also refer to a university scholar.[40] Similarly, the word *faculte* could just denote a particular area of knowledge, but it could also refer to a particular department at a university.[41] Although surgery (unlike physic) was not on the syllabus of English universities, Peter Murray

[37] For descriptions of cures as 'emperyk', see BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, pp. 211, 219; for references to learned Greek and Arabic authorities see BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 193 (Avicenna), p. 216 (Hippocrates and Constantine the African), p. 219 (Galen and Avicenna). See *MED, emperik,* adj., entries 1 and 2.
[38] Kaye, *A History of Balance,* p. 132. John Arderne cites Galen writing this in *TFA,* p. 3. On the use of charms and empirical remedies by university-trained practitioners see Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers', 344–66; Peter Murray Jones, '*Complexio* and *Experimentum*: Tensions in Late Medieval Medical Practice', in *The Body in Balance: Humoral Medicines in Practice*', ed. by Peregrine Horden and Elisabeth Hus (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), pp. 107–28; Rider, *Magic and Impotence,* pp. 160—85.
[39]BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, pp. 422, 454.
[40] *MED, maister,* n., entries 3(a), 5(a).
[41] *MED*, *faculte,* n., entries 2(a), 2(b).

Jones has demonstrated that surgical writings were owned by scholars and academic institutions.[42] Conversely, Michael McVaugh has shown the influence of academic practices and thinking processes upon Latin surgical treatises of the thirteenth and fourteenth-centuries, many of which influenced later vernacular compilations. So, whether it was direct or indirect, a university influence could have shaped the vernacular remedy collections in this manuscript.

A final piece of evidence in favour of academic influence is the collections' organisation: like many learned Latin compilations, the first remedy collection (the one more concerned with physic than surgery) is arranged from head to toe, contains cross references between sections, and other useful finding devices, such as running titles and a table of contents.[43] Like more theoretical, academic treatises it also contains descriptive, diagnostic and prognostic material or dietary advice suitable for the affliction discussed. However, this is not consistently maintained; the length of the discussion is also often a lot shorter than that in more learned, theoretical texts. This, along with the type of accessible vernacular texts surrounding the remedy collection, might suggest that the compiler of the manuscript composed or edited that collection into a form that would be accessible to a pupil, or to a lay vernacular reader without university training but with basic knowledge of anatomy and medical theory (allowing him to comprehend terms such as 'repercussiuis' and 'maturatiue').[44] The showy rubricated references to successful cures certainly suggest that the manuscript was meant to be consulted by others, although it may also have served as a quick reference

[42] Murray Jones, 'Language and Register', pp. 77–78.
[43] E.g., in the section on toothache on BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 218, it is written 'þe grete charm ywrit in þe chaptir of þe mygrem ys ful gode þer fore'. The table of contents occurs on pp. 191–92.
[44] BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 420.

guide for the practitioner himself; notes and colophons in manuscripts demonstrate that Latin-speaking practitioners possessed vernacular translations and simpler texts alongside densely theoretical works.[45] It is impossible to decide definitively between these intentions and worth remembering that one may not have precluded the other. Manuscripts such as this show how academic and lay learning did not exist in strict opposition to one another, but, both in terms of style and content, were part of the same continuum.

Often, then, we must draw conclusions about the diverse identities of writers and readers from details that are open to multiple interpretations. Occasionally, though, recipes state more explicitly that they are intended for lay readers without any formal medical training. For instance, instructions for staunching blood copied in numerous manuscripts claim that they are to be used when there is no physician around; this is perhaps a recognition of the urgent nature of the affliction and the need for immediate first-aid.[46] The comment also implies that the other recipes in the collection are to be used *with* the supervision of a more experienced medical practitioner; some collections may well have been used in this way. On the other hand, a remedy for fevers, jaundice, palsy and poor sight copied at the end of a large fifteenth-century collection explicitly advocates self-healing over the costly fees of the physician:

> þer nys no <m?> medicyn þat schal make a man more hooll þen þis schal þagh he wolde spende xx . pound þeron oþur fourty . bot phisicyauns wolde not þat men knowe þis[47]

[45] See Rossell Hope Robbins, 'Medical Manuscripts in Middle English', *Speculum*, 45 (1970), 393–415 (pp. 408, 410) and Voigts, 'Scientific and Medical Books', pp. 383–84.
[46] Examples include BodL, MS Ashmole 750, f. 187r; BodL, MS Ashmole 1432, p. 29; BL, MS Additional 19674, ff. 12v–13r; BL, MS Sloane 468, ff. 35v–36r; HEHL, MS HU 1051, f. 86r (later hand).
[47] TCC, MS O.2.13, f. 114r.

The recipe is followed by a Latin statement claiming that an individual named Talbot has affirmed the virtues of the remedy against costlier alternatives.[48] If Talbot was a medical practitioner, the remedy testifies to another transferral of knowledge from a specialist sphere to a more amateur and inexperienced (though not necessarily unlearned) one. A similar movement is anticipated by John of Mirfield (d. 1407), a clerk at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, in his *Breviarium Bartholomei*: in this Latin compendium of medical knowledge and cures, Mirfield claims that he has written the *Breviarium* so that he and his readers can avoid the corrupt practices of physicians and heal themselves.[49]

The practice of medicine by unqualified individuals clearly troubled university-educated physicians and guild-trained surgeons. In 1421, a petition was made to parliament complaining that there were too many unskilled persons practising physic.[50] In response, an ordinance was passed against 'meddlers' ('entremettours') in physic and surgery, decreeing that those who practised these arts without a university qualification or apprenticeship would be punished by the law.[51] No distinction was made in the ordinance between illiterate healers promoting their own remedies and services for financial gain and amateur self-healers working from texts written by others.[52] This may

[48] TCC, MS O.2.13, f. 114r: 'Hoc Item Talbot dicit quia medicina preualet plures medicinas que se constabant xx^{ti}. Marcas'. I am indebted to Daniel Wakelin for his assistance with this transcription.
[49] *Johannes de Mirfield of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield: His Life and Works,* ed. and trans. by Harold Richard Aldridge and Percival Horton-Smith Hartley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), pp. 50 (Latin), 51 (English).
[50] See the petition in *Sources for the History of Medicine in Late Medieval England,* selected, introduced and translated by Carole Rawcliffe (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), pp. 62–64.
[51] This ordinance (from the parliament in May 1421) can be accessed online at *PROME,* <www.sd-editions.com/PROME/home.html>[accessed 11/1/2016]. On this and other regulation attempts, see Huling E. Ussery, *Chaucer's Physician: Medicine and Literature in Fourteenth-Century England* (New Orleans: Tulane University, 1971), pp. 18–21.
[52] A distinction between these groups emerges in sixteenth-century texts, when self-educated vernacular readers are pitted more explicitly against university-trained physicians. For example, a 1512 parliamentary act regulating medical practice distinguishes between literate and illiterate practitioners outside the university and suggests both are threats (Rawcliffe, trans., *Sources*, p. 66). See also William Turner, *A New Herball* (London, 1551), ff. A3r–v, where Turner, a university-educated physician, anticipates that he will

suggest that both were deemed threats or it might suggest that such everyday self-healing from books was beneath consideration. Indeed, the fifteenth-century remedy books I am examining rarely allude to any rivalry between the self-educating readers of vernacular collections and more formally-trained practitioners; the above recipe alluding to the costly, corrupt practices of physicians is an exception. When the remedy books do gesture explicitly to a diverse, lay readership they normally do so accommodatingly and with no suggestion of tension. For instance, a verse introduction or epilogue to remedy collections which survives in at least twenty-two manuscripts begins:

> Þe man þat wyl of lechecraft lere
> Rede ouer þis boke and he may here
> Many a medcyn bothe goyd and trew
> Wyll hele sores bothe old and new[53]

The reader is referred to merely as a 'man'; this suggests that no specific type of education is needed to comprehend the texts that follow (though the gendered noun points towards the basic literacy requirement more common amongst males). Fittingly, in many of the extant manuscripts, the remedy collections that follow this verse prologue are of an untheoretical and accessible nature.[54] The shift from 'reede' to 'here' in line two may suggest, though, that even literacy was not a necessary requirement amongst the collection's audiences: the remedy collection could be read aloud to whoever wanted to 'lere'.

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be accused of placing the English population in danger by giving untrained vernacular readers the means to treat themselves.

[53] BodL, MS Ashmole 1444, Part III, p. 184. According to *eVK2*, this poem survives in 22 manuscripts, with two copies in BL, MS Sloane 468, ff. 7r, 80v and TCC MS O.1.13, ff. 45v, 166r–v. To these *DIMEV* 5390 adds another possible manuscript which cannot be traced.

[54] The remedies following this version of the introduction in BodL, MS Ashmole 1444 are short, non-theoretical texts in Latin and English. Keiser, 'Verse Introductions', p. 302, notes that sixteen of the other extant copies precede variations of the same remedy book.

This demonstrates how far we have moved from the narrow academic reader profiles recorded by wills and inventories. To be sure, the evocation of Everyman in this verse prologue is undoubtedly in part a mere show of inclusivity, a textual trope with limited historical veracity: not every man possessed the literacy, time or financial means to learn about medicine from books – even if he wanted to. Nevertheless, the prologue still testifies to a spirit of openness in the fifteenth century: the vernacularisation of medicine may not have given every man access to new written knowledge, but it certainly granted it to more.

Orality, Diversity and Social Hierarchy

We have, then, only a partial picture when it comes to understanding how the circulation of medical texts brought different social strata and networks together. The most common type of explicit attribution in remedy books is to learned Greek authorities, such as Galen and Hippocrates. Such authorities are often bundled together in prologues claiming that the recipes have been drawn out of the writings of these prestigious thinkers.[55] These prologues frequently appear conventional, providing little precise factual information about which books the individual recipes came from and how they came to be in the collection at hand. Where the manuscripts do sometimes provide more detail is oral transmission: recipes sometimes specify the mouths rather than the hands that they have passed through on their journey to the manuscript page. Although this information does not help us to delineate in any more detail the types of

[55] E.g., BL, MS Sloane 213, f. 138r.

people who wrote and read medical texts, it does allow us to speculate about how they themselves felt about questions of provenance, identity, and vernacular authority.

Some recipes record a top-down transferral of knowledge, in which those preeminent because of intellectual capacity, social estate or gender pass knowledge onto those inferior to or dependent upon them. The recipes for *Gratia Dei* used by the Earl of Hereford and Lady Beauchamp (quoted at the beginning of this chapter) are examples of this aristocratic know-how.[56] Another remedy which depicts the healing prowess of the aristocracy occurs in MS Ashmole 1443, the manuscript examined above. This recipe is different from many of the recipes in that collection which cite learned Greek and Arabic authorities, because the transferal of knowledge – and the recipe itself – is structured as a short narrative:

> A lady had a peyne in her kne and no þing myȝt he^l^pe and a knyȝt taut her tak wormewode and spring hit with watir and stwe hit in a nw pot and leyd on þe kne oft and sche was hole[57]

The occurrence of this recipe within a collection possibly copied and composed by a well-educated practitioner reveals some interesting power dynamics. Although it is unclear how the unnamed knight's wisdom was communicated to the 'I' of MS Ashmole 1443 and by how many intermediaries, the inclusion of the recipe in the collection invites the reader to connect the knight and the practitioner in his or her imagination. The educated practitioner may be the knight's intellectual superior but the inclusion of this recipe within the collection functions as a possible reminder of the political importance of, and potential advantage gained by, showing deference to the aristocratic

[56] See Ch. 1, fn. 1.
[57] BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 317.

estate: just as poets required patrons, so physicians and surgeons often required the regular employment of an affluent household.[58] But attributions to individuals of a superior social degree might not always have been a symbol of rigid social hierarchies: such attributions could indicate an aspiration to social mobility and an active attempt at self-empowerment.[59]

The narrative about the knight and the lady also introduces a gendered power dynamic that could be interpreted in multiple ways. On the surface, the remedy reinforces traditional gender hierarchies: the assistance the knight offers to the lady casts him as the active and heroic enforcer of this micro-narrative's resolution and her – previously helpless – as the lucky beneficiary of his wisdom. This is a familiar male-female power dynamic from many medieval romances and other courtship narratives and for readers it may well have evoked those texts instead of actual, everyday life. Reading this attribution in MS Ashmole 1443 as a straightforward reinforcement of aristocratic gender hierarchies is, however, misleading. As Caroline Levine's recent study of form demonstrates, societies are rarely structured by one predominant hierarchy or network of knowledge exchange: power and knowledge circulate in all kinds of overlapping and conflicting ways.[60] In this recipe, it is significant that the knight does not just apply the remedy to the lady's knee, but that the remedy specifically states that he 'taut' her how to make and apply it. The lady is given knowledge that may allow her to bring about the resolution of *another's* illness narrative in the future. She is empowered.

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[58] Marion Turner, 'Illness Narratives in the Later Middle Ages: Arderne, Chaucer and Hoccleve', in *Medical Discourse in Premodern Europe,* ed. by Marion Turner as a special issue of *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 46 (2016), 61–87 (p. 77).
[59] On chivalric discourse in surgical manuals, see J. J. Citrome, *The Surgeon in Medieval English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 113–38.
[60] Levine, *Forms,* p. 4.

Viewed from this perspective, the remedy becomes less of an affirmation and more of a subversion of the conventional power dynamics of other genres.

Another oral encounter is recorded in a different remedy in MS Ashmole 1443 which has been written on a blank leaf by a later fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century hand. The recipe reads:

> For the stone the colyke a provyd and swyr medycyne and hym þat may not pysse
> Take an handefull of parcely an handfull of smaleage and an handefull of femytory þat growyth on the stone wall þe which is lyke a mynte and take thes erbys and fry theym wyth buttur in a panne and ley it to his navyll as hote as he may suffyr it and bynde it hard to it wyth a towell for this is prouyd for trowyth be one Iohn Edward Brykyndynmaker The which maister geram the phizizioun tawght hym in seynt margettes in lothbery.[61]
>
> [*swyr* = sure; *smaleage* = plant of the genus *Apium*, probably wild celery; *femytory* = fumitory]

The recipe depicts an exchange between a bricklayer and an educated physician, the term 'maister' again suggesting a master's degree or less specific kind of scholarly training. The geographical setting of this oral exchange is plausible for a number of reasons. Firstly, many medical practitioners educated at universities also held ecclesiastical offices: the physician may, then, have been connected to the Church.[62] Secondly, although the Worshipful Company of Bricklayers and Tylers only received its royal charter in 1568, evidence exists of apprenticeships in the English building industry

[61] BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 11.

[62]Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society,* p. 112. Earlier, in 1300, the rector of St. Margaret Lothbury, named only as William, was involved in illicit medical practice or trading: he was tried for possessing four putrid wolf carcasses from abroad. He initially claimed to be suffering from a disease called 'Le Lou', but later admitted this to be untrue. See Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society,* p. 138 and *Calendar of Early Mayor's Court Rolls*, ed. by A.H. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924), p. 51.

from as early as the fourteenth century.[63] A church very close to St. Margaret's, St. Stephen's on Coleman Street, was named after the patron saint of bricklayers and this may have meant that there were a lot of bricklayers and apprentices in the area when the recipe was transmitted. [64] Finally, the church of St. Margaret Lothbury was rebuilt in 1440, providing a possible opportunity for the recipe to be transmitted from physician to bricklayer.[65]

It may seem surprising to a modern reader that this knowledge exchange took place between an educated physician and a manual craftsman. The two appear to belong to different intellectual and social circles. The recipe gives little information about the bricklayer's status: he could have been an apprentice or labourer employed by another craftsman, but he could himself have been a master craftsman in charge of his own and others' labour.[66] Because of the financial and political power and social prestige of the guild system, craftsmen of all kinds could have substantial status in medieval towns.[67] Physicians were not associated with guilds, but their counterparts, the surgeons, were. Although physicians often carefully distinguished their cerebral work from the manual work of surgeons, both practices were, in fact, deeply tactile: just like other craftsmen, the physician learned how to read human bodies by training his hands

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[63] Gerard C. J. Lynch, *The History of Gauged Brickwork: Conservation, Repair and Modern Application* (London: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007), p. 3.

[64] On St. Stephen, see Michael Walsh, *A Dictionary of Devotions* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1993), p. 50. Extant parish records from St. Stephen's at the London Metropolitan Archives only date from 1538. Nevertheless, a document from a heresy trial demonstrates that the bricklayer John Stacey was living in Coleman Street in 1528 (see *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII,* ed. by J.S. Brewer, R.H. Brodie and James Gairdner, 23 vols (London: Longman & co., 1862–1932), IV, Part 2 (1872), 1788. It may be that there were a large number of bricklayers there.

[65] John Wittich, *Catholic London* (Leominster: Fowler Wright, 1988), p. 35.

[66] John Harvey, *The Master Builders: Architecture in the Middle Ages* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), p. 13.

[67] On the status of craftsmen and guilds, see Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300–1500* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 1–14; S.H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 150–60.

to touch patients' bodies and his mind to understand those bodily clues. Pulses were checked and skin was felt to determine humoral imbalances. Medical writers recognised this, often debating themselves whether physic should be considered a theoretical science or a manual art. [68] The work of the physician and the bricklayer were not, then, as distinct as they might initially appear.[69]

The second part of the attribution in the above recipe ('The which...lothbery') looks as though it might have been added by the scribe at a slightly later date: between 'brykyndynmaker' and 'the', there is a larger gap than the scribe usually leaves between sentences or clauses and the ink seems to be of a slightly different colour. If this was a later addition, it might suggest that the scribe considered the bricklayer alone an insufficient, unpersuasive authority for the cure; he felt the need to clarify that the remedy originated in a more learned world of medicine. And yet this does not undermine the important role the bricklayer plays in the verification of medical knowledge, which might explain why the scribe chose to identify him as well as the physician: the recipe explicitly states that the physician 'tawght' the bricklayer the cure and the bricklayer 'prouyd' it 'for trowyth', which perhaps implies that the bricklayer was the one to make and apply the cure to his body, confirming its efficacy. Here the potential for future agency implicit in the narrative of the lady with the sore knee comes to fruition, as the bricklayer re-authorises the knowledge he receives by verifying it in practice.[70] This narrative therefore presents a more tolerant view of unqualified

[68] Murray Jones, 'Medicine and Science', p. 433.
[69] On the relationship between manual crafts and other, seemingly different labours, such as love and poetry see Cooper, *Artisans and Narrative Craft;* Kellie Robertson, *The Labourer's Two Bodies: Literary and Legal Productions in Britain 1350–1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Douglas Kelly, *Machaut and the Medieval Apprenticeship Tradition: Truth, Fiction, and Poetic Craft* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2014).
[70] For a related discussion of seventeenth-century *probatum* statements and their relationship to early modern experimental culture, see Wendy Wall, *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), pp. 209–50.

individuals practising medicine than the 1421 ordinance against them: it suggests that it was acceptable for these untrained individuals to become actively involved in the dissemination and testing of healing knowledge which had come directly and explicitly from the university. The value that could be placed upon this physical proving is suggested even more emphatically by another remedy featuring a surprisingly 'ordinary' figure.[71] At the end of this remedy for leprous skin eruptions, it is claimed:

> for it was proved be þe tapster of þe crowne at ware besyde london þe yere of oure lorde god . millesimo . cccc. iij . score . and iiij . yere
>
> [*tapster* = tavernkeeper; *crowne at ware* = Crown pub in Ware, a town in Hertfordshire, thirty miles from London; *millesimo . cccc. iij . score . and iiij . yere* = 1464]

Like the bricklayer, the non-specialist tavernkeeper is credited with actively proving the cure's efficacy. [72] However, because no information is provided about who communicated the cure to the tavernkeeper, the agency of the tavernkeeper rises to even greater prominence than that of the bricklayer. For the authority of the remedy, the proving of the cure is here more important than establishing its academic origins – if, indeed, it had any.

The recipes featuring the lady, the bricklayer and the tavernkeeper do not, then, provide evidence that a more diverse section of society engaged with medical *writing* in the fifteenth century. In fact, they suggest that groups of people, such as women and urban tradesmen, continued to engage with healing knowledge in

[71] This remedy occurs in NLW, MS 572, f. 4r in a large fifteenth-century collection of medical recipes.
[72] A similar thing occurs in the Latin medical notebook of the fifteenth-century humanist scholar William Worcester. Although he mainly cites learned textual authorities consulted in libraries, he also copies cures from local, homely authorities, such as brewers and London barbers, identifying them by both name and profession. See BL, MS Sloane 4, ff. 49v, 56v.

conversation and face-to-face encounters. Fiscal constraints, limited literacy or the simple appeal of convenience may have prompted them to do so; it was still easier and cheaper in the fifteenth century to swap remedies orally than to commission or copy a recipe collection. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the barber Thomas Plawdon and the merchant who brought Jacqueline of Hainault's medical book, it was these kind of people – or, at least, the people who would have socialised with them in the inns and marketplaces – who did begin to read, copy and purchase vernacular medical texts from the late fourteenth century onwards. Seeing ordinary bricklayers and tavernkeepers represented authoritatively in written recipe collections may, then, have affirmed or reaffirmed to them the validity of their own interest in medicine. The attributions – in contrast to those citing Greek and Arabic medical authorities or eminent aristocratic households – again emit a spirit of diversity, suggesting that the exchange of healing knowledge could take place between all kinds of people in all kinds of environments, inns and building sites included.

Complex Responses

Attributions to bricklayers, tapsters, knights and other specific individuals do not appear in every recipe but are part of the inconsistent, varied and unpredictable quality of remedy collections that Carrie Griffin draws attention to as a product of the collections' patchwork compilation.[73] Just because the attributions are sporadic does not mean, however, that they do not affect the reader. In fact, their sporadic nature makes them, and the emotional and cognitive responses they invite from readers, more striking.

[73] Griffin, 'Reconsidering the Recipe', p. 147.

These responses have been overlooked in accounts focusing solely upon the historical veracity and real-world circulation of recipes.

Wonder is one response that some of these attributions might have cultivated, but in different ways. For instance, in the remedies involving the bricklayer and tavernkeeper, the depiction of ordinary, inconspicuous individuals actively forming medical knowledge may have impressed readers. Of course, the bricklayer and the tapster may have 'proved' the recipes by merely applying or having them applied to their bodies; the attribution of agency to them could conceal physical and cognitive passivity. But the point is that, whether or not they were active, the writer of the recipe chooses to frame them as agents: the cures are 'proved be' them. In Middle English writings, the verb 'preven' was associated with many spectacular acts of agency and wilfulness. For instance, in saints' lives and biblical narratives individuals 'preved' their incredible faith through resilience in the face of adversity, torture and temptation.[74] Similarly, in more secular romances, heroes 'preved' their military prowess in dramatic tournaments and dangerous quests: Thomas Malory's Launcelot '[thinks] hymself to preve in straunge adventures'.[75] These provings – despite reappearing frequently as stock features of certain genres – are presented each time as rare and therefore wondrous feats performed by individuals. One might contrast them against the impersonal use of 'probatum est' (it is proven) at the end of many medical recipes. Although that phrase may still have persuaded readers of the efficacy of a cure (as shall be demonstrated shortly), its formulaic passive construction, omitted agent and lack of

[74] E.g., see Proserpina's words to Pluto in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*: 'Witnesse on hem that dwelle in Cristes hous; | With martirdom they preved hir constance' (Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Merchant's Tale,* in *Riverside,* lines 2282–83).
[75] Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, ed. by P.J.C. Field, 2 vols (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), II, 190, lines 19–20.

anecdotal colour means it does not impress in the same way as the narratives involving the bricklayer and the tavernkeeper.[76] By connecting the testing of the cures to the agency of a specific person, the author of those narratives turns the establishing of the cure's efficacy into an isolatable and historical event. The naming of that individual, the place in which they proved the cure, and (in the case of the tavernkeeper), the specific year in which they did so also implies that this was an event worth remembering and recording and perhaps, therefore, one worth witnessing and marvelling at.

As Caroline Walker Bynum argues, many medieval theories of wonder state that one has to believe in the possibility of something happening in order to wonder at it; otherwise it just becomes ridiculous.[77] Accordingly, the same details that might cultivate wonder in these remedies also cultivate belief in the truthfulness of the attributions: the inclusion of specific people, places and years creates the impression that the author has taken the trouble to commemorate them accurately and precisely. This mode of signifying veracity recalls the ways in which court records documented proceedings as well as the way in which medieval annals and chronicles recorded past events. Paradoxically, it also resembles techniques used in a work of fiction: *The Canterbury Tales.* Court records and subsidy rolls suggest that Chaucer based at least two of his characters – Harry Bailey, the Host, and Roger of Ware, the Cook, on real life figures who went by those names.[78] (Coincidentally, Chaucer's cook from Ware has an ulcerous leg which could rival the leprosy of our tapster from Ware). Real life, then, provided these details in all their mundane and grotesque specificity but Chaucer still *chose* to include

[76] See the discussion of reader responses to this phrase on pp. 69–71.
[77] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), p. 54.
[78] *Riverside,* pp. 814, 825. For a recent discussion of Harry Bailey's biographical relevance for the *Tales,* see Sebastian Sobecki, 'A Southwark Tale: Gower, the 1381 Poll Tax, and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*', *Speculum,* 92 (2017), 630–60.

them within his work of art, making them part of his style: the details ensure that his elaborate textual constructions remain plausible to readers.

This overlap between the ways in which documentary, domestic and literary writings represent people, places, and events is the first of many demonstrations in this thesis of interconnections between different modes of writing. Other attributions in remedies recall entirely different genres. Consider the anecdote about the knight and the lady in MS Ashmole 1443: in contrast to the recipes about the tapster and bricklayer, it revolves around two protagonists who are entirely devoid of biographical colour. Anonymous and generic, they seem not to have been plucked from real, lived experience, but from an exemplary narrative such as *The Knight who Forgave his Father's Slayer*.[79] Readers may not have considered the remedy's narrative factually accurate nor have been intended to do so; instead, like exemplary tales in sermons, the narrative probably functioned as means of making the remedy more memorable and endowing it with a sense of timeless, exemplary wisdom.

Other recipes also depict scenarios familiar from specific genres rather than from everyday life. Some of these exploit the cultural capital of the exotic. For instance, a recipe for 'a preciose water emonge all waters' which appears in multiple fifteenth-century remedy collections, contains the claim:

> As philosophers seyne it is impossibill that any man shuld dey of poyson and of pestulence who so vsith to drynk of that water next hys hert and it clepid Water Emperiall For all emperours and grete lordis emong the sarsyns vse to drynke it[80]
>
> [*sarsyns* = Saracens]

[79] *The Knight Who Forgave His Father's Slayer,* in *Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse,* ed. by George Shuffleton (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008), pp. 81–83.
[80] WT, MS London Medical Society 136, f. 85r–v. Variations of this attribution (sometimes attached to different recipes) appear in CUL, Ee.1.15, f. 80v; NLW, MS Peniarth 369, f. 90r; HEHL, HM 64, f. 98vb; BodL MS Ashmole 1413, p. 132.

The name of the water is explained by the claim that it was used by Islamic leaders; this etymological explanation in turn explains, and reaffirms, the water's magisterial (or 'emperiall') healing qualities.[81] Although it is difficult to gauge how much, some medical knowledge *was* probably transported from the Islamic world to the Christian world through the crusades.[82] It seems unlikely, however, that authors and copiers of remedies would have known that a particular remedy derived from Saracen medical practice. It seems more probable that these writers gained their knowledge of Saracen culture through other writings, such as romances. In *Bevis of Hampton (*c. 1300), for example, the Saracen princess Josian is trained in physic and surgery and is able – through her knowledge of herbs – to make herself appear as a leper.[83] The marvelousness of medicine in this romance derives in part from its exotic associations, just as it does in the above recipe. Another clue that the remedy's author may have had the romance genre in mind when framing this wondrous attribution is his use of the word *emperor.* Although medieval writers did use the term emperor in an abstract and generic way to refer to a supreme ruler or army commander, when they used it to refer to a specific individual, they were normally describing the Holy Roman emperor, rulers of the ancient Roman and Macedonian empires or the Mongol empire.[84] *Sultan* seems to have been a more frequent title for Saracen leaders. [85] However, the related fourteenth-century romances, *Otuel a Knight* and *Otuel and Roland,* do feature a Saracen emperor, and

[81] *MED, imperial,* adj., entries (a), (c). On etymology as a foundation for medieval knowledge, see Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 35–40, 54–63.
[82] Piers D. Mitchell, *Medicine in the Crusades: Warfare, Wounds and the Medieval Surgeon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 205–19.
[83] *The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, ed. by Eugen Kölbing, EETS es 46, 48, 65 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1885–94), lines 3671–88.
[84] *OED, emperor,* n., entries 1–2; *MED*, *emperour,* n., entries 1-3.
[85] *MED*, n., *soudan*.

other, now lost romances may have done so too. A final parallel is that, just as the above remedy emphasises the royalty and rarity of the Saracen cure, romances also reaffirm the commonplace association between Saracens, 'superabundant wealth, plentiful luxuries, and hedonism'.[86] The Saracens are often simultaneously desirable and undesirable.

So, how might this association with romance have affected readers' belief in the recipe's attribution? In Suzanne Fleischman's view, the fact that knowledge had been gleaned only from commonplaces, or from texts handed down across generations did not necessarily mean that readers doubted the accuracy of that knowledge – even when it derived from writings like romances which, to a modern reader, appear to contain overtly sensational and fictitious elements. Fleischman convincingly demonstrates that 'objective truth' and 'subjective belief' were often not set against one another in medieval constructions of the historical: instead, 'historical truth was anything that belonged to a widely accepted tradition'.[87] Ruth Morse has similarly argued that assertions that were commonplace in particular genres or traditions came to constitute one kind of truth for medieval readers: what could or might be true often came to define what was true.[88] Based upon cultural commonplaces, the narrative about the Saracen remedy becomes entirely believable from this perspective.

However, whilst a reader is likely to have seen a bricklayer or an ailing tapster in everyday life, he or she is unlikely to have seen a Saracen emperor in the flesh. Keagan

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[86] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'On Saracen Enjoyment: Some Fantasies of Race in Late Medieval France and England', *Journal of Late Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 31 (2001), 113–46 (pp. 124–25).
[87] Suzanne Fleischman, 'On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages', *History and Theory,* 22 (1983), 278–310 (p. 305).
[88] Ruth Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages: Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Brewer has recently demonstrated that accounts of exotic marvels and monstrous creatures in medieval romances and travel writing frequently admit or anticipate a degree of scepticism among writers and readers.[89] Such doubt is also testified to by a medical text: in his late fourteenth-century vernacular text on urine diagnosis, Henry Daniel repeats a standard simile in uroscopy texts which likens the colour of urine known in Latin as *karapos* to the colour of a camel's skin. Although the comparison is, like Saracen luxury, a 'commonplace' in uroscopy writing, Daniel feels the need to reassure readers of its veracity:

> The comentowre vpon Gylis in this same place seythe thus // Color karopos seyth he is flamis like a chamelis skyn [...] and . I . haue leryd of hem þat han seyn thowsentis of chamaylis in the contres of Rome and be yonden . þat all chamaylis [...] ben grey dun . Or ellis whit grey[90]
>
> [*comentowre vpon Gyles* = commentator upon *Carmen de urinis*, a uroscopy text written in the twelfth or thirteenth century by Gilles of Corbeil; *flamis* = a Latin term for a white-yellow colour]

The assurance that this knowledge has been verified by those who have seen *thousands* of camels seems excessive. Daniel anticipates that readers might not believe the second-hand testimony of these travellers and accordingly overcompensates. Readers of the Saracen recipe may have had similar doubts. So, although the boundary between objective and subjective truth was blurred for medieval writers and readers, it is important to recognise that there were different degrees and modes of believing. The variety of ways in which the attributions of these four recipes cultivate wonder and instil or unsettle belief again demonstrates that recipes were not tied to imagining people,

[89] Keagan Brewer, *Wonder and Skepticism in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 79–104.
[90] HEHL, MS HM 505, f. 66v.

places, or the circulation of medical knowledge in one specific way; they could re-present these things through a variety of lenses.

Imagination and Obscurity

Reader and writer identities were, then, imagined in ways that were marvellous or mundane, or an interesting combination of the two. But what about those recipes (the majority of the surviving corpus) which do not provide any information about provenance and intended readership, or provide obscure, confusing or contradictory information? Because many recipe collections were compiled in a patchwork way from multiple sources, inconsistencies are fundamental parts of the texts. Consider the way in which personal pronouns are used. While academic writings normally address the reader of the text consistently as a practitioner treating a sick patient, remedy collections frequently shift between addressing the reader as a practitioner who is consulting the text with intention to cure another, and somebody, possibly a more amateur individual, who wishes to heal him- or herself. For example, in a lengthy recipe collection that now exists in two incomplete fragments, a remedy for back pain ends 'make a plaister and as hoot as he may suffre lay hit to his bakke', referring to the patient through the third person. But the next remedy, for worms in the stomach, closes with 'drynke it whan þou felist þey greuyth the', addressing the patient through the second person.[91] The reader changes from practitioner to patient in an instant. Macaronic collections can be equally inconsistent. In a macaronic fifteenth-century collection, one Latin recipe for toothache ends with the impersonal claim that the medicine 'consolidabit dentes . vermes

[91] BodL, MS Ashmole 1432, p. 49.

mortificat . et dolorem aufert pro perpetuo' ('It will fasten teeth [to the gums]. It kills worms [in the teeth] and takes away pain forever').[92] The Latin recipe written by the same hand on the previous page of this collection, however, contains a direct address to the reader in its title: 'Vt pediclim et pulices non te mordeant' ('so that fleas and lice may not bite you').[93]

In other collections, the addressee even changes mid-sentence (meaning that a reader does not have to read through the entire collection linearly to experience the effect): in a recipe to make a man sweat from a fifteenth-century collection, there is a shift from second-person to third-person pronouns: 'put it in a box and anoynte þi soles of þi fete and þin hondys aȝens a fere of charcole and let hym go to bedde and hele hym þat he take no cold'.[94] The collections evoke through their inconsistencies a diverse readership that is interested in healing itself *and* in healing others. This inconsistency may have left readers confused, unsure exactly at whom the remedy collection was aimed and in what context or contexts – amateur, professional or academic – it emerged. But it also may have stimulated their imagination, allowing them to imagine themselves in a variety of different subject positions: for instance, readers who were amateur self-healers may have been able to imagine themselves as knowledgeable practitioners, healing those around them rather than just themselves. Obscurity and imagination are therefore connected.

The place of obscurity within reading experiences has, however, been overlooked in studies of medical recipes. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, scholarship on the transmission of these texts has focused on discovering the types of

[92] TCC, MS O.2.13, f. 114r.
[93] TCC, MS O.2.13, f. 113v.
[94] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part II, p. 39.

people who might have produced and owned such writings.[95] It often acknowledges the difficulty of recovering such information.[96] However, this difficulty is not only a puzzle which, through diligent study of manuscripts and archives, might be solved; it was also a crucial part of medieval readers' experience when encountering the collections, as the next few examples will demonstrate.

Paradoxically, obscurity can occur when the provenance of the recipe seems most transparent. An example from an early Tudor manuscript, MS Ashmole 1389, will untangle this enigma. This is a fairly scruffy notebook copied by one hand, mainly containing medical recipes. There are clues within the manuscript that the scribe was a medical practitioner. For instance, one recipe in a series of cures for the pox ends 'probatum est per me w aderston' which has led several commentators to speculate that the copier and compiler of the collection was William Altoftes of Atherstone, surgeon to Henry VII.[97] However, as Juhani Norri notes, this 'rare instanc[e]' in which information is provided in a remedy collection about the writer could be a red herring. She claims that it is possible that these details were 'simply copied from another source, the person indicated having no significant role in the putting together of the collection'.[98] Indeed, if one inspects the rest of the collection, it becomes clear that this scribe had no qualms about copying verbatim recipes which contain highly personal anecdotes about somebody else. After a cure for an injured arm, the scribe writes:

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[95] See Ch. 1, fn. 2.
[96] E.g., Michelle DiMeo, 'Authorship and Medical Networks: Reading Attributions in Early Modern Manuscript Recipe Books', in *Reading and Writing Recipe Books 1550–1800,* ed. by Michelle DiMeo and Sara Pennell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 25–46.
[97] BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, p. 28. For this identification, see C.H. Talbot and Eugene Ashby Hammond, *The Medical Practitioners in Medieval England: A Biographical Register* (London: Wellcome History Medical Library, 1985), pp. 380–81.
[98] Juhani Norri, 'Entrances and Exits in English Medical Vocabulary, 1400–1550', in Taavitsainen and Pahta, eds, *Medical and Scientific Writing*, pp. 100–43 (p. 103).

> This I haue moche vsid and louyd for with it i helyd þe scheryff of brystowe the wich of þe <prychk> prykyn of a small dageris poynte as he departyd ij men þe leserde of þe lefte arme almost for of brennyng balnyng and crampe was ny dede thorow and vnhappy barbyr[99]
>
> [*scheryff of brystowe* = Sherriff of Bristol; *leserde* = muscle; *brennyng* = burning; *balnyng* = swelling]

The textual 'I' is lent an air of historical reality by this anecdotal detail. The emotionally weighted verb 'louyd' further increases the highly personal feel of the remedy. And yet these lines also appear in at least one earlier fifteenth-century remedy collection in Cambridge, University Library, MS Kk.6.33.[100] Furthermore, they closely resemble – and seem ultimately to have derived from – an anecdote in a fifteenth-century English translation of some of John of Arderne's medical writings. Translating their Latin source very closely, the translation of Arderne's anecdote reads in one manuscript as follows:

> þis oyntment, forsoþ, luffed I mych; w*ith* þis medicyne cured I a fischer at london, which was hurt in þe lacert of his arme of þe prikkyng of a scharp yren standyng on þe gymeweȝ at þe frere Caromeȝ; wherefore he was almost dede, what of akyng, bolnyng, and brynnyng, and what of þe vncouenable cure of a barbo*ur*[101]
>
> [*fischer* = fishmonger; *lacert* = muscle; *gymeweȝ* = hinges, perhaps of a door; *at þe frere Caromeȝ* = at the Carmelite House; *bolnyng* = swelling; *brynnyng* = burning sensation; *vncouenable* = inappropriate, incompetent]

The anecdote is attached to the same recipe for 'valence of wormode' (a medicinal preparation involving wormwood) in Latin and English versions of Arderne's text and in the two anonymous remedy collections described above.[102] In the remedy collections,

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[99] BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, pp. 221–22.
[100] CUL, MS Kk.6.33, f. 109v.
[101] *TFA,* p. 100. A Latin version of this anecdote can be consulted in BL, MS Sloane 56, f. 15v.
[102] *Valence* is a plant-based medical preparation, see *MED, valence,* n. 2.

though, Ardene's description of the uses of the recipe have been abridged and rearranged slightly and some of the details of the anecdote have been altered: Arderne's fishmonger in London who was injured by an iron protruding from the Carmelite house becomes a sheriff in Bristol who injures himself parting two fighting men. Perhaps these were changed in error or perhaps to suit a new scenario or geographical context; the shift reminds a reader of the way in which mystical writers such as Margery of Kempe borrow and adapt devotional scenes from other continental writers, such as Bridget of Sweden.[103] If a reader of Margery's *Book* recognised this borrowing it may have undermined Margery's authority. But it could also have increased it, by emphasising that Margery's experiences aligned with a tradition of pre-authorised mystical experience: if it happened to Bridget, this logic goes, it might also have happened to Margery.

Readers of the anecdote in the early Tudor manuscript MS Ashmole 1389 might have been similarly aware that the anecdote had been borrowed from another source, because the wormwood recipe in which the anecdote appears shows signs that it has been taken out of context. In Arderne's text and the earlier anonymous remedy book, MS Kk.6.33, the wormwood recipe comes after a medical recipe for 'valence of scabious' and it contains a cross-reference to this preceding recipe. The cross-reference is also included in the copy of the wormwood recipe in the early Tudor manuscript MS Ashmole 1389 but in that collection the recipe for *valence of scabious* occurs over twenty pages earlier.[104] Because the two recipes for *valence* are separated by numerous other remedies in the same hand, the cross-reference becomes irrelevant. This rearrangement

[103] See *The Book of Margery Kempe,* ed. by Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 12–13 for details. I am indebted to Marion Turner for pointing out this parallel.
[104] BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, pp. 195–97.

makes clear to readers of that early Tudor book that the wormwood recipe and its accompanying anecdote have been excerpted from another source.

If readers of recipe collections were aware of this dynamic process through which recipes were excerpted, re-arranged and re-copied, it may have affected the way in which they engaged with personal narratives such as this. The recipe from the early Tudor manuscript seems like a highly personal and factual biographical anecdote but, as soon as one knows that it is copied, unaltered, in multiple places by multiple people, this changes: the 'I' of the recipe seems historical and idiosyncratic and, at the same time, textual, non-specific and repeatable. A.C. Spearing has pointed out that this is a feature of writing in general: a written 'I', unlike a spoken 'I', can always be excerpted, de-contextualised and repurposed to refer to a new situation.[105] It does not embody a specific consciousness but is deictic, representing a vacant persona that may be inhabited by anybody. As Daniel Heller-Roazen demonstrates, this is very similar to how late classical and medieval grammarians such as Donatus and Abelard understood pronouns to function.[106] For Abelard, pronouns 'signify mere substances of which they determine no properties. For in itself, "this" does not say "this substance"' ('...meras significant substantias, quarum nullam naturam vel proprietatem determinant, quia ‚hic' per se dictum neque dicit ‚haec substantia').[107] The 'I' has no inherent referent but shifts according to the textual context in which it occurs.

[105] A.C. Spearing, *Medieval Autographies: The 'I' of the Text* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), pp. 9–11.
[106] Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces: The Roman de la Rose and the Poetics of Contingency* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 31–33.
[107] For the Latin, see *Peter Abaelard's Philosophische Schriften,* ed. by Bernhard Geyer (Münster: Aschendorff, 1919–33), p. 39, lines 20–22. Translation from Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces,* p. 32.

So, in medieval genres such as romance, which frequently contain lines such as 'a sang ich schal you singe', the 'I' of the text need not refer to a particular, historical 'I'. If the work was orally performed, the pronoun might be 'inhabited' by the person performing the poem.[108] But, if silently read, the pronoun might function simply to convey a generic relationship between teller and listener and a general sense of intimacy. Consequently, Heller-Roazen claims that this 'I', which for medieval authors 'appears to express a fundamental anonymity', is 'a work of artifice and *fictio* in every sense'.[109] This conception of the 'I' as part of an illusion crafted by the author of the text is developed further by Spearing, who argues that, in certain forms of fourteenth and fifteenth-century literature, such as dream visions, prologues, and French *dits*, the 'I' of the text begins to take on a slightly different function within the *fictio* of the text: it begins to go 'beyond the functions of telling and asseveration' to signal 'experientiality', which Spearing defines as 'the literary illusion of experience separable from any individual experiencing consciousness'.[110] If readers of highly personal remedies such as that from the early Tudor miscellany were aware that such texts were sometimes recopied and detached from any original biographical context, they may have considered, the 'I' within these texts to serve a comparable kind of literary effect: the personal experience used to authorise the medicine is no longer real, but cultivated through the copying and adoption of a particular type of language. Experience becomes a fiction divorced from any experiencing individual.

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[108] *King Horn*, in *Four Romances of England: 'King Horn', 'Havelok the Dane', 'Bevis of Hampton', 'Athelston',* ed. by Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake and Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), line 3.
[109] Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces*, p. 33.
[110] Spearing, *Medieval Autographies*, p. 20.

Just as the episodes borrowed from Bridget of Sweden did not necessarily compromise the authority of Margery's *Book* for a reader, the opaque or generic nature of attributions may not necessarily have compromised the authority of remedies. Admittedly, we must often speculate about attitudes to opaque attributions from absences rather than presences: medieval scribes and readers rarely leave marks that draw attention to the attribution of recipes to specific people. In the early Tudor collection just mentioned, for instance, those attributions are only marked by the pencil annotations of much later readers.[111] In a late fifteenth-century remedy collection copied after the herbal *Agnus Castus*, a scribe *has* marked out recipes that contain personal attributions but he has also marked out recipes that contain the more generic claim that a remedy is 'probatum'.[112] This lack of special treatment suggests that some medieval readers – not as distracted or fascinated as modern readers by these personal narratives – saw attributions to individuals as conventional features of recipe collections that were no more authoritative than anonymous or opaque attributions.

One sixteenth-century reader of an acephelous fifteenth-century remedy collection even seems to have privileged generic statements *over* specific ones: this later reader has not marked any of the personal attributions in the collection which connect remedies to individuals such as 'lady beuchampe', 'þe goode erle of hereforde' and, most remarkable of all, Mary Magdalene; he or she has also not marked a first-person efficacy claim.[113] Instead, the reader has written 'probatum est', meaning 'it is proven', next to four out of seven recipes in the colllection which contain impersonal verifications

[111] E.g., BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, pp. 28, 139, 221–22. An exception is BL, MS Additional 19674, f. 28v where the scribe (the first reader) has noted in the margin the association with the Beauchamps.
[112] See HEHL, MS HM 58, ff. 43r, 43v, 45v, 48r, 49r, 50r.
[113] Respectively, BodL, MS Ashmole 1477, ff. 30r, 30v, 36v, 34r. Another reader, using a different ink, has marked the Mary Magdalene association several times.

of efficacy, suggesting that he or she was drawn to those verifications.[114] First, the reader writes 'probatum est numquam decepit' ('it is proven; it never fails') next to the title: 'For to make a woman to haue here floures when they bene destanyde this medecyn fayleth neuer'.[115] Although the reader does not copy the *probatum* statement from the recipe, he or she does translate 'nunquam decepit' directly from it. Similarly, later on in the collection, 'probatus est' is written next to a remedy for healing sinews, veins and gout which contains the claim 'þis hath be proued oft of master. G.B.'[116] Although this attribution does contain a name, the initials make it far more enigmatic than the personal attributions above and it is possible that this later sixteenth-century reader of the manuscript would not have known to whom the initials originally referred. Finally, the reader writes 'probatum est' next to a recipe for 'a poudre yprouyd' and 'probatu^m^ next to a remedy to improve impaired sight which ends 'this is prouyd'.[117] In these examples, the impersonal sentiments and passive constructions of the English texts ('yprouyd') are simply reproduced in Latin. The named attributions are ignored. This may have been because the later reader did not know the individuals – such as Lady Beauchamp – to whom the attributions referred. But he or she could still have engaged with the explicit nobility of the connection. Instead, the reader seems to have been more attracted to the generic than the particular, to the idea of experientiality rather than the idiosyncratic, biographical details of actual experience.

Not all readers, though, were necessarily comfortable with the opaqueness of remedies. Consider a reader of a popular late medieval verse herbal which survives in at

[114] The reader does not mark three other recipes containing a *probatum* claim which occur on ff. 34r, 47v, 50r.
[115] BodL, MS Ashmole 1477, f. 26r.
[116] BodL, MS Ashmole 1477, f. 41r.
[117] BodL, MS Ashmole 1477, ff. 48v, 49r–v.

least twenty-six manuscripts.[118] This herbal, which I shall discuss in more detail in Chapters Three and Six, lists the medical and miscellaneous uses of herbs and contains recipe-like advice on how to prepare and combine them. In at least two manuscripts of the text, a writer (and reader) has versified his or her response to his source material and incorporated it into the poem.[119] Part of this response occurs after instructions on using roses for a variety of tricks, such as making a house appear as if it is on fire. These recipes are introduced here, as they are in other versions of the poem, with the assurance that 'þe bok tellyth in latyn'.[120] This may be intended as a reference to Macer's Latin herbal, from whom some of the herbal's medical material derives, although none of this miscellaneous material does. The author of the following lines is not, however, satisfied with this obscure reference and makes the following comment.:

> Þese fowre laste þ*us* wretyn I fynde
> Þat þis c*on*feccyoun will werkyn be kynde
> Whe*þer* it is soth or it ne is
> I seye noȝt but as þe bok me wys.
> Þe autow*ur*s name þat þis wroth
> Þe bok wythnessit ryth noth[121]

[118] One of these manuscripts is missing and in another, Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 91, most of the text is torn away. Of the remaining 24 copies, I have been able to consult 18 versions in manuscripts or editions: BodL, MS Ashmole 1477, Part III, f.3r–v, BodL, MS Ashmole 1397, ff. 117v–18v; TCC, MS R.14.32, ff. 134v–39v; TCC MS R.14.51, ff. 34v–47r; TCC, MS O.2.13, ff. 179r–81r; BL, MS Additional 17866, ff. 5r–16r, BL, MS Sloane 140, ff. 52r–56v (16th century); BL, MS Sloane 147, ff. 94r–112r; BL, MS Sloane 1571, ff. 14v–36v; BL MS Sloane 2457/2458, ff. 2r–7r; YM, MS XVI.E 32, ff. 120r–21r; HEHL, MS HU 1051, f. 85r; CMC, MS 1661, pp. 288–309; SKB, MS X 90, pp. 49–78, consulted in *Extracts in Prose and Verse from an Old English Medical Manuscript, Preserved in the Royal Library at Stockholm,* ed. by George Stephens (London: Society of Antiquaries, 1844), pp. 364–93; BL, MS Additional 60577, f. 119r–v consulted in Edward Wilson and Iain Fenlon, *The Winchester Anthology: A Facsimile of British Library Additional Manuscript 60577* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1981); CGC, MS 345/620, ff. 33v–34v; BL, MS Sloane 2460, f. 34v; OCC, MS 265, ff. 55r-56v (16th century, only f. 55r-55v are in verse; the herbal entries on ff.55v-56v seem to be prose summaries of the verse herbal's contents).

[119] In the manuscripts I have consulted, this version only appears in SKB, MS X90, pp. 49–78 (consulted in Stephens, ed., *Extracts in Prose and Verse,* pp. 364–93) and CMC, MS 1661, pp. 288–309. For a version of the rose section that does not contain these lines see BL, MS Sloane 147, ff. 103v–104v.

[120] Stephens, ed., *Extracts in Prose and Verse,* p. 378, line 925. I have silently expanded unexpanded abbreviations in the edition and substituted thorn for 'y' where appropriate.

[121] Stephens, ed., *Extracts in Prose and Verse,* p. 378, lines 949–54.

The fact that these lines do not appear in all extant copies of the section on rose might suggest that they were removed from a copy of the text by a later scribe or that they were added into the text by a later scribe. Either way, they record a reader grappling with the obscurity of a writers' identity. In the middle two lines of the passage, the reader defers to the authority of his exemplar ('the bok') on the question of whether the recipes work or not. This recalls many medieval writers' defensive deferral to their sources: in the words of Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde:* 'For as myn auctour seyde, so sey I'.[122] However, in the final two lines, the commentator again seems troubled by the question of authority, drawing explicit attention to the lack of an 'autowurs name' in the text he is copying. It is hard to gauge the tone of these lines: frustration, confusion, or curiosity? What *is* clear is that this reader considered the text's obscure provenance an important enough part of his reading experience not only to document it but also to versify it. It seems that the reader wished to make his recognition of the recipes' obscure provenance part of the meaning of the medical poem for future readers. Ironically, one reader's experience of an obscure name is transmitted to another in exactly the same way that the *names* of *auctors* are normally passed on.

So, although such ambiguity is frustrating for scholars tracing medical networks, it should not just be thought of as a problem. It may have irritated some medieval readers – such as the verse commentator – but others were apparently comfortable with, and even attracted to, generic and opaque markers of authority. At any rate, obscurity was a recognised and recorded part of the experience of reading a remedy collection. So, if we wish to engage fully with the recipes, we must follow the lead of the

[122] Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, in *Riverside*, Bk II, line 18.

author of the above lines in the verse herbal and combine an interest in working out 'þe autowurs name' with conscious reflection upon what the presence – *or* absence – of that name may have made different readers think and feel. Reader responses were not necessarily uniform or formulaic. The next chapter continues to nuance this notion of the formulaic by examining some of the diverse motivations that prompted individuals to commission, copy and own remedy collections.

The Problem with Practicality: Manuscript Evidence

In her exploration of the 'psychopathology' of writing, Juliet Fleming offers an escape from the constraints of the functional**:**

> A woman may pen a novel, fill out a form, or sign her name, not for an instrumental reason but because she wants to write [...] Now our woman writes to fill a gap or dominate an environment, or because she has an impulse to measure, stretch, cover, cut, fit, join, contain, open, close, begin, end, or repeat; to clear space or put something away so as not to have to think about it any longer; to reserve or store or spend; to pause, touch, or stroke ... nothing can close this list.[1]

Writing can have a multitude of motives besides promoting and facilitating action in the world. Of course, many medieval compilers, scribes and readers of remedy collections probably did intend their books to facilitate healing action: a sixteenth-century reader seems to testify to this when he or she writes 'vse' next to a remedy for the scab from the previous century.[2] However, there is something ironically *im*practical about the act of writing that verb: it defers the practical action that it simultaneously records. Another reader of the same manuscript who, as the previous chapter demonstrated, writes 'probatum est' next to remedies already containing that promise of efficacy, also seems to have been more interested in translating the recipe text into additional writing, rather than real-world action. Perhaps this reader was interested in bolstering the authority of the recipes by translating their vernacular guarantees into the learned language of Latin, or perhaps he or she wished to distinguish the tried and tested recipes from the

[1] Juliet Fleming, *Cultural Graphology: Writing After Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 31.
[2] BodL, MS Ashmole 1477, f. 35v.

surrounding cures. Alternatively, the reader may simply have wished to document his or her reading experience. As Fleming suggests, there need not be an intellectual or utilitarian purpose behind the act of writing. Sometimes practical and impractical motivations may have co-existed. This chapter explores the diverse motivations that led people to write, read and own recipe collections.

The evidence for these divergent motivations resides in textual, formal, palaeographical and codicological features such as the script deployed, the presence or absence of finding aids, the presentation, ordering, arrangement, and accrual of recipes, and readers' annotations. In recent years, there have been calls for literary critics to pay more attention to these kinds of features and to understand them as opaque signs that lend themselves to close-reading and interpretation. For example, Arthur Bahr and Alexandra Gillespie have called for a new type of formalism that incorporates, instead of opposing, book history, and which requires 'more discussion of the forms of books in literary criticism, and yet more imaginative, critical approaches to those forms'.[3] Daniel Wakelin has echoed this, calling for analysis of 'the forms and aesthetics of books in a literary-critical vein'.[4] The arrangement and presentation of recipes in manuscripts demand this kind of creative and speculative analysis which produces multiple interpretations because the reasons behind such formal choices are often opaque, odd, and ambivalent; the choices also produce multiple effects. What is more, they often bring into conversation – in surprising or counterintuitive ways – the categories of the aesthetic and the practical.

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[3] Bahr and Gillespie, 'Medieval English Manuscripts', p. 360.

[4] Daniel Wakelin, *Scribal Correction and Literary Craft: English Manuscripts 1375–1510* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 15. See also Marshall and Buchanan, 'New Formalism', 164–72 and Levine, *Forms, passim,* where a more creative literary-critical approach to forms of all kinds – textual, social, and political – is advocated.

The impulses behind certain types of manuscript arrangements, such as compilations, anthologies and miscellanies, have already attracted a substantial amount of scholarly attention.[5] The majority of these studies, however, have focused upon canonical literary writings.[6] Indeed, Bahr and Gillespie focus on 'a question that has been important to work on medieval English manuscripts for some time, *especially those bearing literary texts*: what is the relationship between the study of medieval books and the study of medieval literature?'[7] Helen Marshall and Peter Buchanan's essay on the relationship between book history and formalist criticism – 'New Formalism and the Forms of Middle English Literary Texts' – has a similar focus upon the literary.[8]

But the manuscript forms of functional, non-canonical, apparently non-literary texts such as remedy collections are no less interestingly opaque than those of their literary counterparts.[9] Remedy collections are actually one of the *most* interesting genres through which to explore questions about the forms of texts within manuscripts. Just as the question of the recipes' provenance is foregrounded by the attributions contained within them, the question of manuscript form is foregrounded by the remedy books themselves. For example, their form as a collection immediately presents to a

[5] E.g., Seth Lerer, 'Medieval English Literature and the Idea of the Anthology', *PMLA,* 118 (2003), 1251–67; Ralph Hanna, 'Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Literary Production in Late Medieval England', in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. by Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 37–51; *Insular Books: Vernacular Manuscript Miscellanies in Late Medieval Britain*, ed. by Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). Two relevant studies of early modern impulses to compile and accrue are Jeffrey Todd Knight, *Bound to Read: Compilations, Collections, and the Making of Renaissance Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) and Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information Before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

[6] Exceptions include Mari-Liisa Varila, 'In Search of Textual Boundaries: A Case Study on the Transmission of Scientific Writing in 16th Century England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Turku, 2016); Julia Boffey, 'Bodleian Library, MS Arch Selden B.24', pp. 125–34; Blair, *Too Much to Know.*

[7] Bahr and Gillespie, 'Medieval English Manuscripts', p. 346.

[8] Marshall and Buchanan, 'New Formalism', 164–72.

[9] An exception is Wakelin, *Scribal Correction,* pp. 2–3, 146–149, 203–207, which examines scribal treatment of recipes.

critic's mind questions such as: why is there this number of recipes? Why are these recipes copied in the order that they are? In what way does the collection's organisation or *mise-en-page* suggest that a reader was expected to engage with it in a particular way? The way that the same recipes reappear from manuscript to manuscript in very different orders, scripts and navigational systems is a reminder of the multitude of formal choices confronting the compiler and scribe of each collection and a reminder that, in each instance, a formal decision was made.

My argument in relation to the recipes is, then, paradoxical. I contend that remedy collections are unusual because they draw a reader's attention to these questions so explicitly. And yet, although they are an extreme example, I argue that they need not necessarily be discussed in isolation from other text types, as is often the case. Instead, they can contribute to broader discussions about medieval conceptions of order, textual integrity, and aesthetic experience.

Opaque Signs

The organisation and *mise-en-page* of a large number of collections affirms the immediate assumption of some critics that these collections *were* intended to be consulted with the practical purpose of remedying a sickness.[10] For instance, the remedy collections in MS Ashmole 1443, the manuscript examined in the previous chapter for its academic style, lend themselves to easy consultation because they contain running titles, because the first treatise is arranged from head to toe, and because the tracts contain cross-references between different sections.[11] Furthermore, there is a table of

[10] E.g., Mooney, 'Manuscript Evidence', pp. 184–202; Murray Jones, 'Medicine and Science', pp. 436–37.
[11] BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, pp. 193–50, 401–60.

contents at the beginning of the first collection; this contents page is largely copied by the main hand of the manuscript but is completed by the same later hand that adds the recipe involving the bricklayer.[12] Other manuscripts contain tables of contents, index pages or running titles executed by the scribes of the collections and designed to make the recipes within them easier to navigate.[13] While tables of contents were regularly deployed in medieval manuscripts from the thirteenth century onwards, compiling indexes only became popular in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[14] Critical accounts of navigational aids have stressed that such apparatus became increasingly sophisticated and commonplace between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries.[15] Sometimes, though, finding aids have been added to medieval remedy collections by later fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth-century hands.[16] In a sample of forty-six vernacular medical collections each containing over seventy-five remedies, only thirteen had a complete table of contents or an index page.[17] Eight of these were in the same hand as the main collection but five were added by a later reader. Such additions suggest that those later readers found a disorder or lack of navigational assistance in medieval remedy collections which they felt compelled to redress if the collections were to be made usable.

Many remedy books do, indeed, seem difficult to navigate. One of the most obvious internal finding aids for modern readers, alphabetical order, did not become

[12] BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, pp. 191–92. This same later hand has also added a table of contents to the collection of surgical recipes: see BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 399.
[13] E.g., BodL, MS Ashmole 1477, ff. 20r–52v; BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, pp. 6–8; BL, MS Additional 33996, ff. 76v– 80r.
[14] Parkes, *Scribes, Scripts and Readers*, pp. 53–54 and pp. 62–63.
[15] E.g., Parkes, *Scribes, Scripts and Readers*, pp. 35–70.
[16] E.g., BL, MS Sloane 468, ff. 2–6r; BodL, MS Radcliffe e. 10, ff. 55r–56r; TCC, MS R.14.51, ff. iv-v.
[17] 11 manuscripts had contents pages and 2 had indices, suggesting that the former finding aid was more popular. See Figure 7 in the appendix for details of the collections sampled.

commonplace in practical writings and reference works till the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: in the above sample of forty-six collections, only two were alphabetically organised.[18] Sometimes, large medieval remedy collections follow no discernible order at all. Out of the forty-six collections, eleven displayed no ordering principle that would help one to navigate the collection.[19]

Far more common, however, than total disorder, alphabetical order, contents pages or indices is the head-to-toe structure described earlier. This structure had long been deployed and occurs in Old English recipe collections based on Roman and Greek sources, as well as twelfth- and thirteenth-century academic medical treatises.[20] Thirty-one of the forty-six late medieval collections sampled were ordered partly or entirely from head-to-toe. However, this structure is not always synonymous with order. Consider London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 680, a manuscript from the first half of the fifteenth century, which appears, from superficial evidence, to have been designed with a practical healing purpose in mind: its small dimensions (115mm in width by 142mm in length) would make it portable for a travelling practitioner. Furthermore, the remedy collection, which is copied after an herbal, begins with remedies for the head.[21]

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[18] Blair, *Too Much to Know,* pp. 117–18, 121. For alphabetically ordered collections, see BodL, MS Ashmole 750, ff. 184r–94r and WT, MS London Medical Society 136, ff. 1r–95v. This latter collection opens with a head-to-toe structure, beginning with remedies for head, eye and teeth aches; some of the recipes are similar to those in other head-to-toe orders (compare the head and ear recipes on YM, MS XVI, E.32, f. 15r and ff. 18v–19r). However, after remedies for toothache on WT, MS London Medical Society 136, f.3r, the compiler starts listing remedies for all kinds of 'ache', in line with the alphabetical system he has adopted. A large initial B starting a new section on f. 6r is the first explicit sign of the ordering system, which continues until f. 88v (though initials are not always used to signal new sections).

[19] E.g., HEHL, MS HM 1336, ff. 2v–18v, 29r–34v; HEHL, MS HM 64, ff. 104r–13r, 143v–53v, 156v–76r; BL, MS Harley 2378, ff. 17r–61v. Some collections, such as YM, MS XVI, E.32, ff. 82r–109r contain an ordering principle in the sense that all the recipes are for waters or ointments, but it is still not apparent how readers would find a particular treatment.

[20] On an Old English head-to-toe ordering system, see Debby Banham, 'Dun, Oxa and Pliny the Great Physician: Attribution and Authority in Old English Medical Texts'*, Social History of Medicine,* 24 (2011), 57–73 (p. 59).

[21] BL, MS Lansdowne 680, ff. 22r–73r.

After the head-to-toe order, there are recipes for all-over-body afflictions, such as *jaundise*, *morphea*, and *wilde fire* (erysipelas). These all-over afflictions frequently occur at the end of head-to-toe structures.[22] However, in this manuscript, mixed in amongst these all-over afflictions are slightly more specific recipes that might have been more appropriately placed earlier in the collection, such as cures for a tick in a man's ear, for swollen knees, and a remedy for headache mixed among the gout remedies; this is perhaps because gout can cause pain in the head, although this logic is never articulated in this manuscript.[23] Potential confusion is also generated by the fact that, shortly after, a new head-to-toe cycle begins with eye and head recipes.[24] Towards the end of the manuscript, a third, incomplete cycle begins.[25] *Within* these cycles, a degree of disorder is also present: for example, remedies for *gout festre* (festered swelling) are interspersed in the second cycle between remedies for other ailments.[26] A reader searching for a cure for *gout festre* may easily have overlooked some of these.

One experiences disruption to the head-to-toe order in most manuscripts. As in the aforementioned collection, the head-to-toe order can restart multiple times within a collection, begin halfway through, or disintegrate prematurely.[27] Moreover, individual remedies can appear in unexpected places. For example, in one collection, a remedy for toothache appears between remedies for vomiting and not being able to eat; in another, a toothache remedy appears in between two remedies for animal bites, and in a third, a

[22] All-over afflictions begin on BL, MS Lansdowne 680, f. 28v.
[23] Respectively see BL, MS Lansdowne 680, ff. 30v, 31r–v. In the contents page on WT, MS Wellcome 5262, f. 6r, a manuscript containing many of the same remedies as MS Lansdowne 680, the connection between gout and head pain is made explicit by the title 'For þe gout þat nemeþ mon in þe hed'.
[24] BL, MS Lansdowne 680, f. 33v.
[25] BL, MS Lansdowne 680, f. 72r.
[26] BL, MS Lansdowne 680, ff. 57v–58r, 62r, 63v–64r.
[27] An example of a collection in which the head-to-toe order only starts part-way through and later restarts is MS Sloane 3866, ff. 14r–52v (the order begins at f. 26r and restarts at f. 52r). An example of a collection which begins head-to-toe but becomes disordered is BL, MS Sloane 1315, ff. 119r–49r.

cure for toothache appears between remedies for kidney stones and migraines.[28] Such disorder may have been an unavoidable consequence of the piecemeal process by which scribes accessed different exemplars; accessed one at a time, the recipes had to be bolted onto one another rather than integrated.

However, even if such disorder was sometimes unavoidable, there is other evidence in MS Lansdowne 680 which suggests that its scribe did not *prioritise* navigability: there is no evidence that a contents page ever accompanied the manuscript and the herbal copied before the remedy collection (a version of the text known as *Here Men May See The Virtues of Herbes)* is not organised through finding aids or alphabetical order (such as other herbals like *Agnus Castus*).[29] Furthermore, the inclusion of rubricated titles for each recipe stops for a few pages and blank spaces are left where the titles should be.[30] This cessation coincides with the beginning of a new head-to-toe order which may suggest that the exemplar the scribe used for this part of the remedy book was faulty. However, though the scribe could have worked out what many of the remedies were for from their contents, he never comes back and fills the spaces in; instead it is left to a later reader to add titles to the margins of the manuscript.

Modern readers – used to easily searchable, digitised documents – of course need to be conscious that medieval readers would have had different, probably lower expectations of navigational aids and different understandings of what counted as useful. For example, in one substantial remedy book from the first half of the fifteenth century, a contents page has been written to accompany a large remedy collection.[31]

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[28] See respectively TCC, MS R.14.32, f. 123; BL, MS Additional 19674, ff. 20r, 75r.
[29] The *eVK2* reference number for this version of the text is 4049.00.
[30] BL, MS Lansdowne 680, ff. 33v–39v.
[31] See BL, MS Additional 17866, ff. 16r–42r and 45v–46v for the recipes and contents page respectively.

That remedy collection contains two head-to-toe cycles, but the order of the second cycle is different to that adopted in the collections discussed above: all-over body afflictions such as *saucefleume*, *scab* and *shingles* occur after ailments of the head, eyes and mouth and before afflictions of the breast and stomach, rather than at the end of the collection.[32] These differences demonstrate that order is subjective; one person's head-to-toe order differs from another and this explains the need for the additional finding aid of the contents page. That contents page, however, does not contain folio or page numbers, as a modern reader might expect; it is just a list of the recipes in order. Perhaps it was considered sufficiently useful by the scribe, as it provided the reader with a means of locating the recipes by pinpointing them in relation to one another. Or perhaps the scribe simply did not wish to exert the effort of adding folio numbers.

In the above examples, then, the size, organisation and annotation of the collections function as opaque signs which give ambiguous (and sometimes contradictory) clues about whether the scribe or compiler of the collection intended it to be fit for practical use. Two small notebook collections provide the most emphatic examples of the way in which the practical intentions of a scribe or reader can be manifest and yet simultaneously opaque.[33] Each of these informally executed manuscripts, which both contain hundreds of recipes, seem to have been copied predominantly by single scribes, who were probably also the manuscripts' first owners. Judging by the frequent changes in ink and script style, this copying was done over a long period of time, with the scribes copying recipes whenever they came across exempla, tried out a cure, or heard of one. The majority of one of them, Oxford, Bodleian Library,

[32] For the first head-to-toe order, see BL, MS Additional 17866, ff. 16r–21v; for the second, see BL, MS Additional 17866, ff. 21v–42r. The all-over ailments begin in the second cycle on f. 23r.
[33] BodL, MS Rawlinson C.506 and BodL, MS Ashmole 1389.

MS Rawlinson C. 506, is copied by a mid to late fifteenth-century secretary hand, and contains a large number of medical, astrological and necromantic texts in Latin and English, which seem like they could be accessible to a reader without an extensive medical education. As it stands today, the part of the manuscript written by this hand fills over two hundred and fifty folios and recipes occur throughout these leaves, often interspersed between other texts. No contents or index page survives. Recipes are distinguished from one another by crosses in the margins and rubricated titles. Although some of the mini-collections contain head to toe orders (or at least parts or beginnings of them), others do not. As in MS Lansdowne 680, the restarting and disturbing of this order negates its usefulness as a navigational aid.

There is some evidence, though, that the scribe initially intended the manuscript to be usable: in some of the clusters of recipes, a number has been written next to each recipe and these numbers might have corresponded to a contents page that no longer survives (the manuscript begins abruptly with a recipe for the falling evil – rather than a head recipe – which could suggest that it is acephalous).[34] The numbering seems to have been written in the same ink as the once red, now faded, rubrication highlighting the recipes' titles and it looks as though it was completed by the collection's scribe. Interestingly, these recipe clusters are almost the only texts in the manuscript to be included within the numbering system: the great majority of the other, longer medical, astronomical and necromantic texts have no such markings.[35] This could

[34] On BodL, MS Rawlinson C. 506, f. 101r, the scribe reaches 9190 and begins numbering again from 1; he reaches number 5 before ceasing on f. 101v. The scribe may have decided to begin numbering from 1 again because he thought he had reached 10,000. On multiple occasions the scribe's numbering suggests that he was not confident using Hindu-Arabic numerals, which only became standard in the fifteenth century: on f. 99v, for example, he makes the same error, proceeding straight from 8190 to 9000. The practise of restarting from 1 when a certain number has been reached can also be observed in WT, MS Wellcome 5262, f. 6v, where numbering of recipes in a table of contents stops at 99 and begins again at 1.
[35] An exception is the bloodletting verse numbered on BodL, MS Rawlinson C. 506, f. 27r.

suggest that whoever numbered the recipes deemed them to be, or anticipated that they would be, the most useful of the texts copied, or it could suggest that he or she considered them the hardest to navigate. It is significant, however, that the numbering is not maintained throughout the manuscript: large clusters of Latin and English remedies go unnumbered and the numbering ceases entirely in the middle of the largest recipe collection, six recipes after the scribe (who numbers the recipes incorrectly) thinks he has reached ten thousand recipes.[36] These clusters might have been consciously deselected but there is no obvious reason why such large swathes of remedies would be disregarded. It seems more likely that they were not marked because they were missed, or because the annotator grew tired of numbering; counting the recipes may have drawn his attention to just how many recipes he had numbered and copied.[37] The fact that no table of contents survives also casts doubt over whether the scribe's purpose was ever fulfilled.

This leaves us with a paradox. On the one hand, the size of the manuscript (150mm in height by 105mm in width) suggests that it was intended, at least at the beginning of the copying process, to be portable and consultable on the go.[38] Linne Mooney has also argued that material evidence within the manuscript, such as fragments of herbs and splashes of liquid, illustrates that it was actually used in medical

[36] BodL, MS Rawlinson C.506, f. 101v. Clusters of recipes go unnumbered between ff. 1r–14v; 62v–69v; 101v–16r; 117v –19v; 120v; 131r–47v; 148r–69v; 230r–31v; 261r–65v.On the incorrect numbering see Ch. 2, fn. 34.

[37] E.g., if the scribe was retrospectively numbering the remedies, the recipes on BodL, MS Rawlinson C.506, ff. 63r–82v may have been missed because they occur immediately after uroscopy texts from which they may not have been easily distinguishable.

[38] On the relationship between portability and the size, shape, and weight of codices in relation to practical devotional manuscripts see Daniel Sawyer, 'Codicological Evidence of Reading in Late Medieval England, with Particular Reference to Practical Pastoral Verse' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2016), pp. 127–73.

encounters.[39] And yet, because it is inconveniently thick (62mm) and because its finding aids are so sporadic, it is unclear how readers could carry it around with ease or make full use of the remedies contained within it. The desire to accumulate more recipes seems to have outweighed the ability or desire of the scribe to catalogue them appropriately. Perhaps the scribe's satisfaction derived, then, from the process of ordering rather than its result: after all, ordering can – with its emphasis on patterns, neatness, and propriety – be a very therapeutic and aesthetically satisfying act.

An early Tudor recipe collection analysed in Chapter One, MS Ashmole 1389, has similarly small dimensions (156mm in height by 100–105 mm in width). However, it is far lighter and thinner than MS Rawlinson C.506 (measuring approximately 25mm). This could suggest that it was copied with portable use in mind. The finding aids, though, offer more ambiguous evidence about whether it served a practical purpose. The collection is preceded by the beginning of a contents page copied in the same hand as the rest of the manuscript.[40] This contents page seems designed to counter the fact that the collection is not structured by any ordering principle. Occasionally afflictions for the same ailment are grouped together, but this is not the norm, and there is no logic behind the order in which the ailments are discussed.[41] Furthermore, throughout the collection, the recipes are written one after the other with nothing to separate them aside from their titles and a few horizontal lines. The contents page is necessary, therefore, to make the collection navigable. And yet it cannot perform this function because it is incomplete: only fifteen of the recipes in the manuscript are listed in the contents page; the rest of the eight-leaf quire is left blank. No pages seem to be missing

[39] Mooney, 'Manuscript Evidence', pp. 196–99.
[40] BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, p. 2.
[41] E.g., between BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, pp. 26–29, six remedies for the pox are copied together.

and so the rest of the contents page does not seem to have been lost. It seems more likely that the scribe left those leaves vacant in order to finish the contents page at a later date. Unforeseen circumstances may have prevented this, or perhaps the scribe felt that the task of inventorying the many recipes he had accumulated was too great.

All of the above manuscripts, then, contain finding aids which imply that scribes and readers intended the recipes – at some point in time, or at one level of consciousness – to be usable. However, an unwillingness to undertake the time-consuming task of inventorying them, a privileging of the appearance of order over actual order, unforeseen disruptions, or a temptation to accrue more recipes than could be catalogued seems to have overpowered or thwarted that intention. Perhaps, in the end, merely possessing the collection was enough of a comfort: knowing one had cures at one's fingertips, even if one could not easily find them, may have felt like a reassuring initial defence against future illness.

Accrual

These large collections of remedies that are not consistently organised by finding aids present us with a puzzle, posing questions about the intended and actual uses of the manuscript and simultaneously eluding any definitive answers. As we have seen, there are multiple reasons why an individual may have failed to make his or her collection fully navigable. There are also multiple reasons why he or she may have wished to accumulate lots of recipes in the first place. Some of these will now be explored in more depth.

Accumulation of large numbers of recipes – a feature of a lot of collections – occurs at two levels. Firstly, the collection as a whole can be extensive, containing many

different recipes for many different ailments. Secondly, accumulation can occur at the level of the individual affliction. In the example below from a large fifteenth-century collection, multiple recipes for removing hair are listed (see Figure 1 in the appendix for an image of the manuscript). Bold type represents rubrication:

> To don her to go awey
> Tak and mak leyȝe of otestraw askes and wasche þe hed þerwiþ ofte **Anoþer** for contrarious heere take þe iuys of yuyleues and when þe heer is pulled away anoynte the stede þerwiþ // **Anoþer** tak þe askes of holmen barkes and vnslekked lyne orpyment and welle water and do þer on // **Anoþer** tak þe leuys of wodebynde stamp hem wel þan tempre hem vpp wiþ vynegre than ley it on þe hery place // **Anoþe**r tak amtys eroun and þe blode of a remows þat is to say of a bakke and þe gumme of yuy orpyment and aysel and stamp hem wel togeder wiþ vnslekked lyme frote þe place ofte þerwiþ þis is good but it is violent. // **Anoþer** tak nettel seed and stamp it wiþ vynegre and aftur gret hete anoynte þerwiþ // **Anoþer** tak moure eroyne ymeyd wiþ oille þat an yrchon hatte be soþen þan do þer on // **Anoþer** tak and do awey þe heer ferst than tak þe blood of a remows and þe galle of a goot and anoynte it ofte þerwiþ and it nil noȝt suffre þe here to growe[42]
>
> [*leyȝe* = sediment; *otestraw askes* = burnt ashes of oats; *yuy* = ivy, buck's horn plantain or the European ground pine;[43] *stede* = place; *askes of holmen barkes* = ashes of the bark of the evergreen oak; *vnslekked lyne* = unslaked lime, calcium oxide; *orpiment* = arsenic trisulphide; *amtys eroun (ampte eiren)* = pupae of ants; *remows* = bat; *bakke* = bat; *aysel* = vinegar; *frote* = rub; *moure eroyne* = pupae of ants; yrchon = hedgehog; *goot* = goat]

A large number of remedies are listed for a lot of the ailments in this collection. The same compulsion to keep adding and connecting recipes can be observed in manuscripts where later readers have added recipes, sometimes linked to those already written and sometimes not, in the blank spaces of a leaf.[44] There seems to be a recurrent compulsion

[42] YM, MS XVI.E.32, ff. 17v–18r.
[43] *MED*, *ivi,* n., entry 1(a) and *MED*, *herbe-ive,* n.
[44] E.g., BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, pp. 6–11; BodL, MS Laud misc. 685, f. 86r; TCC, MS R.14.32, ff. 94r–95r.

amongst the readers of these texts to add, supplement and complete. However, the paratactic construction 'another [...] another [...] another' frequently implies that the list can never reach completion, that there is always room for one more remedy to be added. Like Juliet Fleming's catalogue of the endless possible motivations for writing, it seems as though 'nothing can close this list'. Acts of adding, combining and completing are not unique to manuscripts containing remedies. In fact, this action might be seen as one of the defining features of medieval and early modern aesthetic practices: writers such as Jean de Meun and Robert Henryson continue poems by previous writers; compilers add and connect texts to one another in literary miscellanies; poets such as Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Gower create miscellaneous tale collections by adding one text to another.[45] Similarly, Chaucer may have left poems such as *The House of Fame*, *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Legend of Good Women* deliberately unfinished, incorporating into the poems a comment upon the difficulty of finishing an artwork; there are always more tales that could be told.

This tendency to add, however, seems *especially* notable in recipe collections. This is not a purely medieval phenomenon: lots of people today still paste recipes together in scrapbooks. Perhaps it is the small, self-contained nature of many recipes and the consequent ease with which they can be excerpted and reassembled that creates this compulsion to collect them. Medieval scribes and readers recognised this compulsion. For example, in the early Tudor collection discussed above, the scribe copies two recipes for *saucefleume* before writing 'thes suffysyth for thys dysease'.[46] This declaration of sufficiency is a possible recognition of the temptation to keep on

[45] For studies of the impulses behind compiling and collecting, see Ch. 2, fn. 5.
[46] BodL, Ashmole 1389, pp. 205–7.

acquiring remedies and the need to impose an end on that potentially endless process. A similar thing can be observed in the collection sent from 'Nicholas Neesbettt' to another practitioner (discussed in Chapter One). This collection contains notes embedded among the recipes. The second of these notes begins by proclaiming 'whatt mysters me to wryte ȝow mo [remedies] when þ^i^se er sufficient'.[47] Sufficiency is declared, but straight after this declaration the scribe proclaims 'neuer þe lesse one schalle ȝe haue þat is general'. The temptation to add another remedy is too great. Similarly, in the third note in this collection, the scribe declares 'Me mystyrs noȝt to sett ȝow in powders for corvasyse for þe oyntmentes a foresayd er gude enawgh for syche maters'.[48] However, he ends the note by proclaiming 'þerfore I wryte none to ȝow at þis tyme'.[49] The final phrase, anticipating another instalment of similar recipes, undoes the earlier declaration of sufficiency.

One might compare these moments in recipe collections to the rhetorical manoeuvre of *occupatio*: this device, frequently deployed by Chaucer, involves denying one's intention to narrate or describe something before proceeding to do exactly that. For instance, Chaucer's Knight opens his tale by proclaiming:

> And certes, if it nere to long to heere
> I wolde have toold yow fully the manere
> How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
> By Theseus and by his chivalrye;
> And of the grete bataille for the nones
> Bitwixen Atthenes and Amazones;
> And how asseged was Ypolita
> [...]
> And of the feste that was at hir weddynge,
> And of the tempest at hir hoom-comynge[50]

[47] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 67.
[48] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 68.
[49] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 68.
[50] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Knight's Tale,* in *Riverside,* lines 875–84.

After denying the possibility of narrating these events, the Knight does narrate them, just as the denial of the scribe of the above recipe collection contains within it an affirmation of further recipes. What is more, the Knight's speech displays a similar paratactic, polysyndetic structure (And [...] And [...] And)' to the recipes ('Another [....] Another [...] Another') which serves in both cases to emphasise the process of accumulation taking place. In his thirteenth-century poetic handbook, the *Poetria nova*, Geoffrey of Vinsauf describes two ways in which poets can treat their subject matter: the first, *abbreviatio*, involves treating that matter in a condensed and abridged manner, while the second, *amplificatio*, which Geoffrey devotes far more time to, involves expanding one's depiction as much as possible.[51] Although Geoffrey does not explicitly recommend polysyndeton as a means of amplifying one's material, he does recommend asyndeton for abbreviating it; adding in conjunctions would have had the opposite effect.[52] What Geoffrey's handbook and the praise of *amplificatio* suggest is that accumulation was central to medieval conceptions of textual composition: the repetitive, polysyndetic structure of a remedy book entry might seem unremarkable, tedious, and uncrafted to a modern reader but to a medieval reader such expansion may have appeared as one of the building blocks of textual crafting.

Practically, it seems sensible to offer readers multiple remedies for one affliction: if they are unable to procure the ingredients one recipe required, they could turn to another. Medieval readers, though, did not always interpret the accumulative structure of remedy discourse from this single, practical perspective: they suggested a variety of motivations for the formal decision. For example, the fifteenth-century

[51] Faral, ed., *Les arts poétiques,* pp. 203–18, lines 203–689 (amplification) and pp. 218–20, lines 690–736 (abbreviation).
[52] Faral, ed., *Les arts poétiques,* pp. 218–19, lines 698–99.

Scottish poet Robert Henryson created a parodic set of remedies known as 'Sum Practysis of Medecyne', which will be discussed at length in Chapter Seven. In these parodic remedies, Henryson dismisses the 'saying' (spoken or written discourse) of an inept medical practitioner as 'geir of all gaddering, glaikit, nocht gude' ('borrowed and accumulative stuff which is foolish and not good').[53] Although almost all medical writings were compilations of earlier Latin and Greek writings, Henryson identifies the practitioner's thoughtless accumulation, or 'gaddering', of recipes from other sources as a sign of his own lack of expertise. Accumulation is also associated with inefficacy in a late medieval verse remedy book surviving in at least seven manuscripts. Playfully imitating the anaphoric beginnings of remedy collections' accumulative structures, the poet writes after a recipe for swollen testicles:

> Anodire and þat helpe nowth
> Anodire medysyn must be sowth[54]

The poet acknowledges that multiple recipes must be given because individual ones may prove inefficacious. He does not seem troubled by this trial-and-error approach. The same cannot be said, however, of the fourteenth-century Italian poet Petrarch, who often expressed hostility to physicians in his private letters and public writings.[55] He also gives inefficacy as a possible reason for the accumulation of cures but, like Henryson, he understands this accumulation as a sign of physicians' corruption or ineptitude. Furthermore, rather than anticipating that just one or two of the cures will prove

[53] Robert Henryson, 'Sum Practysis of Medecyne', in *RH,* line 6. The translation is my own. See *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue, saying,* n.2.
[54] TCC, MS R.14.39, f. 1v.
[55] See the *Invective contra medicum,* in Francesco Petrarca, *Invectives,* ed. and trans. by David Marsh (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 2–179.

ineffective (as the verse remedy writer does), Petrarch assumes that all of the remedies will be inefficacious. In a private letter he writes:

> We must suspect that either this thing called medicine, whatever it may be itself, among men is still some kind of deceptive art thought up to the vast peril and loss of mortals, whereby a few become rich but many are imperiled, or that it is a true art, usefully devised but least understood by our fellow men and least applicable to the natures of men, of which the variety is inestimable. For what other conclusion remains when out of a thousand remedies not one helps us, many do harm and often kill?'[56]

Petrarch claims that physicians propose multiple different cures for one ailment – all of which fail – because they have no genuine understanding of the way human bodies work. He also implies that the great variety of human constitutions will always exceed the physician's capacity to generate multiple remedies. More theoretical medical writings constantly emphasise the need to tailor medicines according to the 'inestimable' variety of human natures: their different complexions, ages, and environments. The astrological influences of the planets upon individual human bodies were also thought to affect the way medicines worked at particular times. For example, in the prologue to the *Breviarium Bartholomei*, a medical treatise probably intended for use at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, the cleric John of Mirfield justifies his inclusion of multiple remedies for one ailment with this astrological explanation:

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[56]Francis Petrarch, *Letters of Old Age: Rerum senilium libri*, trans. by Aldo S. Bernardo, Saul Levin, and Reta A. Bernardo, 2 vols (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), II, Letter XII.2, p. 459. For the Latin, see Francesco Petrarca, *Res seniles: Libri IX-XII*, ed. by Silvia Rizzo and Monica Berté (Firenze: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 2014), Letter XII.2, p. 382: '...suspicari liceat aut hanc ipsam que medicina dicitur, qualiscunque sit in se, inter homines tamen artem quandam esse fallendi damno ingenti ac periculo mortalium adinventam, qua pauci ditarentur, multi periclitarentur, aut esse artem veram et utiliter excogitatem sed a nostris minime intellectam vel, si hoc tolerabilius dicitur, intellectam quidem sed naturis hominum, quarum est inextimabilis et infinita varietas, minime applicabilem. Quid enim aliud relinquitur, dum de mille medicinis una non proficit, multe officiunt et sepe conficiunt?'

> I propose, in a good many cases, to set down in this compilation several medicines for one and the same disease; since it is a peculiarity of medicaments that at one time they are beneficial, and at other times they are not – a fact which is a matter for wonder! The diversity of effect is perhaps due to the influence of a man's natal planet'[57]

For some medieval writers and readers, then, the accumulation of medical recipes was an acknowledgement of the limited nature of human healing knowledge and an implicit admission that some or many of the remedies were unlikely to help a patient. However, for others, such as Mirfield, accrual was a practical response to something that was a marvel, not a problem: the sheer variety of human bodies and the circumstances that they find themselves in. The fourteenth-century surgical writer Guy de Chauliac also saw accumulation as a positive, practical measure. In the Middle English translation of Chauliac's *Chirurgia Magna,* the treatise is described as 'a gadryng togedre of þe crafte of cirurgye', recalling Henryson's description in 'Sum Practysis'.[58] The following justification is offered for this accumulative form:

> In construccioun alway bettre þinges comeþ. Conynges forsoþe beþ imade by putttyng to. It is not forsoþe possible to begynne þe same and ende it. We bene forsoþe children in þe nekke of a geaunt; neuerþelatter we may see als mykel as þe geaunt and somewhat more. Therfore þere is in construccioun and gadryng onehede and profit.
>
> [*conynge*s = knowledge]

[57] Aldridge and Horton Smith Hartley, eds and trans, *Johannes de Mirfield*, pp. 50–51: 'Propterea multas medicinas pro vna et eadem infirmitate ponere propono in multis locis istius compilacionis. Quoniam de proprietate medicaminum est quod iuuabunt vno tempore et non alio. Et hoc est mirabile. Et forte facit hoc varietas proprietatis adquisite ex influencia orbis alicuius.'
[58] Ogden, ed., *Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 1, lines 24–29.

Because each person only has a finite time on earth to further human knowledge, we can never begin and end a work, but only add to what has gone before. For Chauliac, then, accumulative forms in medical writings are positive signs of intellectual collaboration.

These responses demonstrate how the accumulation of recipes – a seemingly straightforward formal feature of remedy collections – presents readers with a variety of interpretive choices. The possible motivations behind the structure form a diverse list rivalling the list of motivations that Fleming argues can underpin any act of writing. The practicality of the collections is also called into question by these interpretative possibilities: the accrual of recipes as a response to the changing nature of human bodies and human circumstances testifies to the collections' practical usefulness. However, when the accrual is conceived as a pre-empting of inefficacy, it testifies to the remedy books' practical uselessness. Because the collections examined in this thesis, trimmed of theory and unnecessary explanations, rarely state what the impulse behind such accrual is, it is left entirely to the reader to interpret these polyvalent structures. Each reader is invited to become a formalist critic in his or her own right, interpreting the forms of recipes rather than merely translating the texts' instructions into action.

Distinctions: Textual and Social

Only a few compilers and copiers of recipes *are* explicit about why they have chosen to collect multiple cures for one affliction. These comments reveal yet more ways of interpreting accrual, as they normally compare particular qualities of different cures. For instance, in a large remedy collection in a late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century collection, a remedy for burns concludes 'þys fayrest helyng þat ys of alle þe oþer but

not þe hastyest'. The next remedy, for the same affliction, ends 'þys ys þe raþest helyng for soþe'.[59] The reader is asked to choose between aesthetic and practical concerns, between a remedy that will heal the burn best and, as the adjective 'fayre' implies, create the best cosmetic appearance, and a remedy that works more efficiently. In a similar way, a few recipe collections give the reader a helpful choice between a costlier remedy and a cheaper alternative. For example, one fifteenth-century collection contains fourteen successive remedies for gout. (Additional remedies seem, though, originally to have been present on damaged leaves).[60] Amongst them, one remedy finishes with the claim 'þis ys excelent and expert and preuid þing', and yet the next opens by proclaiming, 'But for lordis and ladys...'.[61] Social degree and cost decide the type of medicine that should be used. In these two examples, the factors differentiating the remedies are made clear and the choice offered is, in terms of real-world practice, a useful one.

Sometimes, though, marks by writers and readers that appear to create distinctions between accumulated remedies actually function quite differently. For example, in a late fourteenth or early fifteenth-century collection, there are seven recipes for the same eye afflictions.[62] Some of these are drawn into a hierarchical structure. The second remedy begins 'Item et melius' ('another and it is better'), suggesting that this remedy is more effective than the first. A third remedy is then copied without comment before a fourth remedy begins 'Item optimum' (another that is

[59] BL, MS Additional 33996, f. 129v. The same pairing appears on MS HM 64, f.172rb. For other versions of this collection, which may also contain the pairing, see Ch. 1, fn. 1.
[60] BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, pp. 312–15. Four more recipes for gout (including one by a later hand) occur on p. 317. Remedies for epilepsy, which was sometimes considered a type of gout, appear in-between on p. 316.
[61] BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 313.
[62] BL, MS Additional 33996, f. 131r–v.

best); this remedy ends with the English claim 'þys ys souereyne'. Glossed by the preceding Latin word *optime,* the adjective *soverain* functions here superlatively to mean 'foremost of its kind'.[63] This hierarchy, apart from the odd third recipe inserted between the better and best remedies, is easy to comprehend. However, the next remedy in the sequence begins 'Item þe moyst souereyn' ('another that is the most best'). This construction – adding the superlative 'moyst' to the already positive 'souereyn' – seems problematically tautological. The creator of this hierarchy, having used too many positive constructions, now seems to be straining to differentiate between the accumulated remedies, and one can imagine that a reader would have difficulty knowing how to distinguish between them too. Moreover, the decision to copy the third, sixth and seventh recipes within and after this hierarchal structure is odd: why would one choose these cures over avowedly better ones? The insatiable impulse amongst compilers to keep on accruing recipes is again demonstrated. That accrual may have been motivated by the factors discussed earlier in this chapter. But it may also have been motivated by a desire to showcase social status and financial success: placing unremarkable cures next to superior ones affirms the ability of the collection's owner to choose the superior over the inferior, regardless of the extra cost and effort involved.

Such ostentatiousness is more explicit in other recipes. The remedy below, which is for the skin affliction *saucefleume*, occurs in a short collection of recipes and charms copied by a fifteenth-century mixed hand. It is entitled, 'A souereyne medcyne for the sausflewme provid in hye and lowe', suggesting that it is affordable for all levels of society. One would not expect such a catch-all remedy to be of the finest quality.

[63] MED, *soverain*, adj., entry 1(b).

Consequently, there is a peculiar disjunction between the recipe's title and its insistence that only the best ingredients be used:

> Take the fayrest baroweys grece þat ȝe can gete and newyst slayne of the flathys þan boyle hit fayre and white // than take þe fayryst and þe whytest brymston þat ȝe can gete[64]
>
> [*baroweys grece* = boar's fat; *flathys* = a type of fish; *brymston* = a substance containing sulphur]

The adjective or adverb *fair,* which is used three times, can mean 'suitable' or 'fitting' and this is probably its dominant meaning in the first two instances.[65] The superlatives may, then, have reflected a predominately practical interest on the part of the copier or compiler of the collection: it is logical to assume that using the most suitable type of an ingredient and boiling it for the appropriate amount of time would produce the most effective, and therefore most useful, remedy. For the enactor of the recipe, the knowledge that he or she had made the recipe in the most proper way may also have had its own therapeutic power, reassuring and easing that individual.

Nevertheless, the superlatives still suggest a pretentiousness, a desire to show off one's ability to procure the highest quality ingredients one can. A later remedy in the same manuscript, which is copied by a different scribe, contains a similar implication. It is entitled: 'Good for þe stone þe wich hathe ben provyd in London with hye and lowe'.[66] The fact that the title ends with the same suggestion of accessibility as the above cure for *saucefleume* may indicate that these two recipes originally derived from the same

[64] CUL, MS Ee.1.15, f. 15r. A later hand has crossed out this remedy and others on ff. 14v, 15r, 16v, 17v, 18r, 78r–v, 93r, 94r–v. The majority of these are charms and, since the above recipe is followed by a crossed-out charm, it may have been crossed out by mistake.
[65] *MED, fair,* adj., entry 9.
[66] CUL, MS Ee.1.15, f. 21v.

source. This latter recipe does not contain superlatives but it does begin with a list of sixteen substances required for the remedy. Because that assumes a certain purchasing power on the part of the reader, a similar disjunction between the inclusivity of the title and the exclusivity of the remedy's contents is experienced. This disjunction again seems designed to flaunt the ability or desire of somebody – whether it be the recipe's original author, the collection's compiler, or an intended owner or reader – to purchase and produce the best they can.[67]

Aesthetics and Manuscript Decoration

One might not expect boar's fat and brimstone to be markers of social prestige. However, as we have seen, the recipes encourage us to redefine and expand our understanding of a variety of medieval categories, including the aesthetic, the crafted, and the careful: the accumulative structures of recipes have been shown to parallel the fundamental structures of more explicitly rhetorical and artful texts. Also, seemingly practical forms such as finding aids may, because of their association with order and ordering, have produced aesthetic effects. The above remedy for *saucefleume* makes more explicit this connection between order and aesthetics: the adjective or adverb 'fayre' – repeated three times in the recipe – communicates the recipe's concern with proper practice but, because of this, it also evokes the concept of *decorum*, executing something in an appropriate manner. Although the term *decorum* only began to be used and theorised in sixteenth-century discussions of rhetorical and poetic theory, the idea

[67] Griffin, 'Reconsidering the Recipe', p. 148 makes a similar point in relation to culinary recipes.

of fittingness had long been integral to classical and medieval poetic handbooks.[68] For instance, a mid-twelfth-century commentary upon Horace's *Ars poetica* lists six faults of poetic composition which include incongruous variation in style and matter ('incongrua stili' and 'incongrua materie') and the incongruous arrangement of the parts of a work ('partium incongrua positio').[69] In relation to the latter fault, the commentator explains, 'Parts are placed incongruously when the beginning is discordant with the middle, and the middle is discordant with the end' ('Que utique incongrue ponuntur "Cum primum medio, medium quoque discrepat imo"').[70] This commentary was influential on later writers of *artes dictaminis* and *artes poetriae*, such as Matthew of Vendôme and Geoffrey of Vinsauf, and the principle was known to vernacular poets: it is why Chaucer's Pandarus warns Troilus not to include any 'discordant thing' in his love-letter to Criseyde.[71] These principles suggest that performing something in the correct, ordered and proper manner can produce aesthetic pleasure – whether that something be the writing of a letter, the preparation of an ointment, or the copying of recipes.

The remedy's demand for the 'fayryst' and 'whytest' kind of sulphur, which has parallels in other recipes, evokes aesthetic discourse in another way too.[72] Paleness was a dominant part of western European ideals of human, and particularly female, beauty.[73]

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[68] Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter, introduction to *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts* and *Literary Theory, AD 300–1475,* ed. by Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 1–60 (p. 41).

[69] Karsten Friis-Jensten, 'The Ars Poetica in Twelfth-Century France: The Horace of Matthew of Vendôme, Geoffrey of Vinsauf and John of Garland', in *The Medieval Horace,* ed. by Karsten Friis-Jensen and others (Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2015), pp. 51–99 (pp. 62–63).

[70] Latin quoted from Friis-Jensten, 'The Ars Poetica in Twelfth-Century France', p. 62. Translation from Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter, 'Prologues to Twelfth-Century School Commentaries on Horace's *Ars poetica,* CA. 1150', in Copeland and Sluiter, eds, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric,* pp. 551–58 (p. 553).

[71] Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, in *Riverside*, Bk II, lines 1037.

[72] See BodL, MS Rawlinson C.506, f. 115v for a recipe for *chare de quince* which claims that the medically useful preserve it produces is 'þe whitest of all'.

[73] Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 181–84. Other ways of constructing colour of course also existed, including those in

Desired females in chivalric narratives are described in such terms: Emily in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* is 'fairer [...] to sene | Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene'.[74] Furthermore, instructional texts offered advice to real-life men and women on how to achieve this aesthetic ideal: a recipe copied by English landowner Robert Thornton in his recipe collection contains instructions 'for to mak a woman white & softe'.[75] The application of this same aesthetic discourse to substances such as brimstone and boar's fat suggests that medical texts constitute a craft discourse both connected to, and distinct from, other accounts of aesthetic experience: medical writings are based upon the same aesthetic principles, but they apply these principles to the most unlikely of things.

`There is one final area in which this expansion and redefinition of aesthetic language is necessary: the visual appearance of remedy collections. Although I do not have space to analyse in depth all of the manuscripts I have examined, I would like to point out one significant oversight in discussions of medical manuscripts' execution. Remedy collections are often discussed as if they belong to two extremes: according to this binary, some are designed only for practical use and are scruffy, unadorned documents, while others are designed for display and are ornately decorated.[76] In actuality, medical manuscripts are far harder to categorise. Some contain ornate and

which black or Saracen bodies are idealised: see Heng, *Invention of Race*, pp. 184–256; Cohen, 'On Saracen Enjoyment', pp. 119–20.

[74] Chaucer, *The Knight's Tale*, in *Riverside*, Bk I, lines 1035–36.

[75] Ogden, ed., *The "Liber de diversis medicinis",* p. 58.

[76] E.g., Mooney, 'Manuscript Evidence', pp. 187, 199 draws a sharp contrast between 'ornate collections for the aristocracy's leisured reading' which – judging from 'the expense of production' and the 'present condition of the manuscript[s]' – were 'not intended for daily use', and medical or scientific manuscripts intended for use which 'are usually made of paper, [and] often written by a single hand without rubric or embellishment of any kind'. See also Voigts, 'Scientific and Medical Books', p. 379.

gratuitous decoration but are also adapted for use by scribes and readers.[77] Others exhibit features that, though not aesthetically pleasing when compared to more colourful and ornate manuscripts, nonetheless transcend the requirements of the functional. For example, in one manuscript, a scribe copies a set of Latin and English medical texts, including recipes, in a mid-fifteenth century, neat secretary hand, with the heading for each recipe copied in a larger, bolder, slightly more calligraphic script.[78] There is no colour or fancy decoration but care has clearly been taken over the appearance of the collection. Similarly, in another codex, medical texts and recipe collections have been copied predominantly by a fifteenth-century, smart bastard anglicana hand.[79] The *textura* influence upon this script suggests that the manuscript was carefully and slowly copied. The manuscript also contains the red and blue rubrication typical of many fifteenth-century manuscripts and used to separate the recipes from one another. And yet there is nothing impressively lavish or ornate about the manuscript; its small dimensions also suggest that it was intended for itinerant use. These examples demonstrate that the appearance of remedy collections can not only bring the categories of the aesthetic and the practical into confusion but can also encourage us to reconsider what counts as careful execution, aesthetic awareness or ornamentation. These manuscripts may not be the most visually pleasing that exist, but more concessions have been made to the demands of appearance than needed to have been if the texts were considered purely practical.

[77] E.g., WT, MS Wellcome 5262, ff. 1r–61v contains elaborate illustrations frequently unrelated to the medical recipes *and* a contents page by the scribe which makes the collection navigable.
[78] E.g., BL, MS Additional 19674, ff. 2r–50v.
[79] CUL, MS Kk.6.33, ff. 11r–113r.

MS Ashmole 1389, the early Tudor collection discussed earlier, also confuses the boundary between the aesthetic and the unsightly, the careful and the thoughtless. Many of the recipes, copied in stints by the scribe, are copied in an anglicana hand just formal enough to be classed as anglicana formata.[80] The overall impression of the manuscript, though, is of scruffiness or *in*formality. The pages have not been ruled and so the text is often written lopsidedly. Half-way through, though, the writer begins to write the first few words of each recipe's title in a larger, more formal display script: a variety of bastard anglicana is adopted, as the scribe exacerbates the slight formata tendencies of the remedies' main script.[81] Yet, sometimes he only uses this script for the first few words, and so the name of the cure or the illness it treats is not highlighted: for example, it is written, '**For a man** or woman þat ys blastyd wyth wyckyd wynd and sp^i^rittys'.[82] (See Figure 2 for similar examples from a subsequent leaf). The scribe also does not use the script for every title.[83] The titles do not, then, assist a reader in locating specific remedies more easily; they only help in a general way to distinguish one recipe from the next. However, there is already a line dividing the recipes and so the display script is not even essential for clarifying text boundaries. Its function seems largely, though not entirely, aesthetic. This does change though. Shortly after, the scribe starts using the script more consistently for the entirety of the recipe's title.[84] It is used for: **'Oyle of Castor'**; '**To make a goode oynement for sorys'** and '**An oynement to dystry deyde fleshe**'.[85] It seems that the scribe begins to consider how the titles might more

[80] The proportions of this hand shift regularly (along with the ink), which suggests that the recipes were copied in stints.
[81] BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, p. 84.
[82] BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, p. 84. Bold script here represents display script.
[83] E.g. the recipe to destroy dead flesh at the top of BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, p. 90 and the recipes on p. 93 do not have titles in this script.
[84] BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, p. 100.
[85] BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, p. 103.

effectively serve a useful purpose, as well as an aesthetic one. Soon, however, this practice is abandoned.[86] This suggests that the navigational assistance which these titles offered was not seen by the collection's scribe as essential to the manuscript's purpose, again complicating the notion that it was intended for straightforward practical use.

Once one looks closer at recipe collections, it becomes apparent that there are lots of features which complicate the categories of the aesthetic and the functional in the same way as these titles. For example, in a fifteenth-century collection in London, British Library, MS Additional 19674, the scribe has left a lot of marginal space around remedies. This serves a practical purpose, allowing for annotation. Indeed, this scribe has used the margin to add extra information or information he forgot to copy in the main body of the text.[87] The space may also have been intended to invite annotation or supplementation by future readers and, on a few occasions, later hands have added comments in the margins and recipes to the blank space at the bottom of the page.[88] Most often, though, there are no reader annotations and the marginal space remains blank. Given that some of the written annotations analysed earlier, such as the *probatum* statements, were possible evidence of individuals reading and annotating remedy texts rather than using them, this blankness might suggest that the readers of this manuscript were more interested in translating its instructions into practice than writing in it. At the same time, though, the blankness might testify to a *lack* of use by readers: visually pleasing, it reminds one of costlier copies of other types of text (literary or otherwise) in which large amounts of blank marginal space have been left to

[86] BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, p. 106.
[87] E.g., MS Additional 19674, ff. 40v, 41r, 42r, 42v, 44r.
[88] E.g., MS Additional 19674, ff. 16r, 18v, 20r, 21v, 22v, 28r, 28v, 32r, 34v, 35r. The annotation even on these pages, though, is slight.

demonstrate the ability of the manuscript owner to purchase a large book without cramming its contents onto a smaller and therefore cheaper number of pages.[89] The space – poised between the aesthetic, the socially prestigious and the functional – consequently exists as yet another opaque mark just as capable as any literary text of producing multiple interpretations. The following chapters are devoted to unsettling further this boundary between polysemous literary texts and monosemous practical ones by exploring the recipes' linguistic and structural features.

[89] E.g., BodL, MS Bodley 686, ff. 1r–173v, which contains an expensively produced copy of *The Canterbury Tales*.

Practical, Impractical and Aesthetic Elements:

Verse

Late medieval writers of history and translators of scripture sometimes described prose as a more truthful mode of writing than verse because it did not demand that facts and ideas be manipulated to satisfy the demands of meter and rhyme.[1] As Eleanor Johnson points out, the Wycliffite Preface to Jeremiah claimed that the original Hebrew text had 'yolden to the mesure of metre and verse'; this apparently led to confusion when translators tried to recreate the Hebrew verse in Latin. The only remedy, the Wycliffite Bible implies, is a new translation of the text into English prose.[2] Verse – subordinating content to form – is depicted in this preface as promoting inaccuracy.

As we shall see, a great variety of alternative ways of framing the opposition between prose and verse existed in parallel. These oppositions, usually asserting the advantages of one form over the other in terms of comprehension, aesthetics, truthfulness or translation, inevitably end up obscuring the fact that, in practice, the uses of prose and verse were far from distinct. Medieval discussion in the *artes poetriae* about metrical and rhythmical prose show that even the forms could blur.[3] The next two

[1] Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiographies in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 2. Eleanor Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and the Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk and Hoccleve* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 57–58.

[2] *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books, in the Earliest English Versions Made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and His Followers,* ed. by Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden, 4 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1850), III, 342; Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory,* p. 58.

[3] Murphy, *Rhetoric,* pp. 157–61.

chapters explore this range of attitudes to prose and verse in instructional medical writing.

It is revealing that the crafting of prose remedies for practical and aesthetic purposes has been discussed less than the crafting of their verse counterparts: the modern use of the word *prosaic* to describe a writing style that is 'plainly or simply worded', 'lacking in poetic expression', or 'dull' might explain why commentators on medical writings have turned to verse, rather than prose, for examples of craft or charm.[4] This portrayal of prose medical writings will be challenged in Chapter Four. Before that, though, a reappraisal of verse remedies and herbals is required.

The scholarly attention medical verse has received has been limited in three ways.[5] Firstly, commentators often only fleetingly acknowledge the aesthetic qualities of the poems before subordinating those qualities to utilitarian purposes. The ways in which the cognitive and the aesthetic can intersect, complement, and impede one another and the ways in which verse forms can fail to fulfil, or imperfectly fulfil, cognitive functions have not been explored. Secondly, verse's aesthetic powers are normally hastily circumscribed: one critic, echoing the Host's condemnation of Chaucer's tail-rhymed *Sir Thopas*, dismisses medieval medical verse as 'doggerel'. [6] Thirdly, little attempt has been made to describe the *multiplicity* of ways through which aesthetic and cognitive effects are produced by the poems. Instead, end rhyme is presented as the only feature distinguishing verse remedies from prose ones.

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[4] *OED, prosaic,* entries 2(a) and 2(b).
[5] Specific arguments are reviewed on pp. 114–15.
[6] George Keiser, 'Rosemary: Not Just for Remembrance', in *Health and Healing from the Medieval Garden*, ed. by Peter Dendle and Alain Touwaide (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008), pp. 180–204 (pp. 185, 191).

This chapter reassesses those assumptions. Of course, not all medical verse is a product of supreme poetic skill, but many poems do display signs of being more thoughtfully shaped than commentators acknowledge. Furthermore, there are some distinctive ways in which verse, compared to prose, produces cognitive, sensual, and aesthetic effects. These include manipulation of the relationship between rhyme and sense units, more concentrated and visually perceptible semantic and syntactic play, and greater experimentation with voice. Whether or not these features perform an explicit instrumental or mnemonic function, they might be said to fulfil the Horatian dictum – often rehearsed in the Middle Ages – that poetry should teach *and* delight, as well as the medieval interpretation of this formula which claimed that poetry should delight the reader *in order* to make him or her more inclined to learn its lessons.[7] It is problematic, though, to assume that medieval writers were always working within this prescriptive model: sometimes delight may have taken priority over instruction.[8] Some of the evidence discussed below certainly suggests that writing medical texts in verse did not always, or only, refocus writers' minds onto the real-world functionality of their texts: it could also encourage them to pay closer attention to the playful possibilities of language.

Conceptions of Medical Verse: Past and Present

Verse medical texts are not exclusive to late Middle English. Instructional verse has a long tradition in classical Greece and Rome and in Arabic writing.[9] Furthermore, some of

[7] On the popularity of this dictum, see Olson*, Literature as Recreation*, pp. 20–38.
[8] See Olson, *Literature as Recreation*, pp. 24–31, for evidence that poetry 'for pleasure rather than profit was acknowledged, if not venerated, in the Middle Ages' (p. 31).
[9] E.g., Rabie E. Abdel-Halim, 'Medicine and Health in Medieval Arabic Poetry: An Historical Review', *International Journal of the History and Philosophy of Medicine,* 3 (2013), 1-7; Peter Toohey, *Epic Lessons:*

the most enduring academic Latin medical writings were composed in verse: for example, Gilles of Corbeil's verse treatises on pulse and urine diagnostics, written in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, were both popular university teaching aids. As M. Teresa Tavormina notes, Gilles' *Carmen de urinis,* was considered 'the equivalent of a medical bestseller'.[10] Similarly, an eleventh-century writer living in France, often identified by modern scholars as Odo de Meung, wrote a popular herbal in Latin hexameters which was based on the writings of Pliny, Gargilius Martialis and others: at least three extensive Middle English prose translations and adaptations were produced in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, one of which may have been used as a source for parts of an English verse herbal (discussed in depth later in this chapter).[11] In most medieval versions of this poem, though, Odo de Meung was known by a different name: Macer. It is normally assumed that this was a pseudonym, adopted by or attached to the author in an allusion to the Roman didactic poet, Aemilius Macer (d. 16 BC). Other medieval texts also contain excerpts from, or allusions to, earlier medical verse.[12]

In spite of such acknowledgements of indebtedness, tradition, and continuity, fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Middle English medical verse had a different role and status from earlier Latin writings. One might assume that these poems – written in the vernacular, easy to understand, and engaging – would have been widely copied by

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An Introduction to Ancient Didactic Poetry (London: Routledge, 1996); Robert M. Schuler, 'Theory and Criticism of the Scientific Poem in Elizabethan England', *English Literary Renaissance,* 15 (1985), 3–41.

[10] M. Teresa Tavormina, 'Three Middle English Verse Uroscopies', *English Studies*, 91 (2010), 591–622 (p. 592).

[11] Frank J. Anderson, *An Illustrated History of the Herbals* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 30–32. On these translations, see George Keiser, 'Vernacular Herbals: A Growth Industry in Late Medieval England', *in Design and Distribution of Late Medieval Manuscripts in England*, ed. by Margaret Connolly and Linne R. Mooney (York: York Medieval Press, 2008), pp. 292–307 (p. 300).

[12] E.g., some copies of the Middle English verse herbal based partly on Macer contain the following Latin line from the late twelfth-century *Regimen sanitatis Salernitanum*: 'Cur moritur homo dum salgia crescit in orto'. In the 18 manuscripts consulted, this occurs on SKB, MS X. 90, p. 74; TCC MS R.14.51, f. 43v; BL, MS Sloane 147, f. 108v (abbreviated form); BL, MS Sloane 1571, f. 35r; BL, MS Additional 17866, f. 14r.

different kinds of readers. One might also expect scientific poetry to have increased the prestige of the vernacular by demonstrating the capacity of English to produce verse *whilst* communicating specialist knowledge: as Anke Timmermann remarks in relation to scientific verse in general, 'Science now spoke not just the language of the man outside the university, but also in a rhythmic, melodious voice'.[13] This is true for other branches of medieval science: vernacular alchemical poetry, for example, proliferated in the fifteenth century and brought that craft – or at least its textual description – out of clerical circles and into the public domain of lay literacy.[14] In medicine, though, verse seems to have been a less popular formal choice: the number of Middle English verse medical writings is not only small when compared to the number of verse alchemical texts, but also when compared to the number of prose medical writings.

The surviving verse medical corpus can be tentatively confined to the following texts using the *Digital Index of Middle English Verse (DIMEV)*, Linda Voigts and Patricia Kurtz's database of *Scientific and Medical Writings in Old and Middle English (eVK2)*, and George Keiser's *Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500: Works of Science and Information*.[15] These are: a rhymed dietary by the poet John Lydgate (*DIMEV* 1356, 2369),[16] a verse remedy book existing in multiple versions and sometimes intermingled with prose (*DIMEV* 2343, 2519),[17] several individual or short sequences of rhymed

[13]Anke Timmermann, 'Scientific and Encyclopaedic Verse', in *A Companion to Fifteenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. by Julia Boffey and A.S.G. Edwards (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2013), pp. 199–211 (p. 199).
[14] Timmerman, 'Scientific and Encyclopaedic Verse', pp. 200–2; Michela Pereira, 'Alchemy and the Use of Vernacular Languages in the Late Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 74 (1999), 336–56.
[15] See list of abbreviations and bibliography for full details. Where possible, I have included the *DIMEV* number for the text. However, when the text is missing from *DIMEV*, I have used the number attached by *eVK2* to a specific version of the text; the database can be searched to find other versions.
[16] The second *DIMEV* number refers to a disordered version of 'The Dietary'.
[17] *DIMEV* lists these as separate items but they are versions of the same text. The text survives in at least seven manuscripts: Tokyo, MS Takamiya 46, ff. 14v–20v; HEHL, MS HM 64, ff. 114r–20r and 143v–76r (the recipes are intermingled amongst prose remedies); SKB, MS X.90, pp. 36–47, 78–80 (copied twice); BL, MS

remedies, diagnostic, prognostic or gynaecological texts which are sometimes seen as part of the longer remedy book (*DIMEV* 1355, 4165, 5251 and *eVK2* 2576.00, 7969.00, 8145.00, 6399.00, 8105.00, 7012.00, 6969.00, 2757.00),[18] a verse herbal, (*DIMEV* 4171), two poems on rosemary (*DIMEV* 5977, *eVK2* 1321.00), five bloodletting texts containing verse (*DIMEV* 847, 1570, 5395, 6847 and *eVK2* 7463.00),[19] two verse plague treatises including Lydgate's 'A Doctrine for Pestilence' (*DIMEV* 6586 and 1944), three uroscopy poems (*DIMEV* 1791, 1975 and *eVK2* 7757.00), several verse prologues and epilogues (*DIMEV* 438,2687, 2688, 3527, 3808, 5390, 5458, 5656, 6710), several short verses on the humours, anatomy or medicine in general (*DIMEV* 1142, 4168, 4926, 4367, 5650 and *eVK2* 0982.00), verses on lifestyle and diet (*DIMEV* 560, 6552 and 6614) and multiple rhymed charms (for example, *DIMEV* 789, 1018, 2154, 4322, 4601,6243 and *eVK2* 3274.00).[20] One might also count a prayer with medical intent (*DIMEV* 4327) or lines of medical verse embedded in larger prose works (*DIMEV* 5458, 6062).

Out of the above texts, Lydgate's 'The Dietary', which is partly based on the twelfth-century *Regimen sanitatis Salernitanum*, survives in the highest number of copies, appearing in at least fifty-nine manuscripts.[21] Only a few Middle English poems – including Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Langland's *Piers*

Additional 17866, ff. 16r–21v; PML, MS Bühler 21, ff. 45r–49v; TCC MS R.14.39, f. 1v; TCC MS R.14.51, ff. 1r–18r.

[18] I have not included *DIMEV* 5094 or 5114 here because I consider it part of an extended remedy book (*DIMEV* 2343). I have included *DIMEV* 5251 even though it often circulates with the remedy book because, as a longer text on dropsy, it may originally have circulated independently: see SKB, MS X.90, p. 43 where the text has a separate incipit.

[19] *DIMEV* 6847 can be seen as a variant version of *DIMEV* 5395.

[20] One might also include *DIMEV* 5379, a text explaining the different effects parts of the body have on man's physical and cognitive capacities; it is not rhymed and written in irregular lines but has been set out as verse (See CMC, MS Pepys 1236, f. 91r).

[21] Jake Walsh Morrissey, '"To al Indifferent": The Virtues of Lydgate's "Dietary"', *Medium Aevum,* 84 (2015), 258–78 (p. 258).

Plowman and the *Prick of Conscience* – survive in comparable numbers.[22] Sometimes, 'The Dietary' occurs with other scientific texts, but sometimes it occurs alongside quite different kinds of verse.[23] In twenty-six of the medieval witnesses listed in *DIMEV*, 'The Dietary' circulates with other poems by, or attributed to, Lydgate. Some of the compilers and scribes of these manuscripts may have copied the poem simply because it was by Lydgate (and merited a place in an anthology of his writings) or because it occurred in a ready-made anthology. And yet Lydgate was such a prolific writer that it seems likely that at least some of these scribes would have been able to pick and choose which of his writings they included. 'The Dietary' may have been consciously selected because it was considered medically or morally useful, pleasingly crafted or, as Jake Walsh Morrissey has suggested, because it addressed a broad non-specialist audience, contained orthodox and familiar medical advice, and could be easily excerpted or expanded to suit a reader's purpose.[24] None of these reasons precludes the others.

The number of surviving witnesses for 'The Dietary' is, however, abnormal when compared to the numbers for other extended verse writings. The text surviving in the next highest number of manuscripts is a bloodletting poem (*DIMEV* 5395 and 6847), which survives in at least thirty manuscripts in two versions.[25] The third highest text is the verse herbal, surviving in at least twenty-six late medieval or early sixteenth-century manuscripts. Many of the other manuscripts listed above survive in fewer than ten

[22] Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge, 1970), p. 219.
[23] On the manuscript context of 'The Dietary', see Orlemanski, 'Thornton's Remedies', pp. 251–55.
[24] Walsh Morrissey,'"To al Indifferent"', 258–78.
[25] Together, *eVK2*, *DIMEV, NIMEV,* and Keiser's *Manual* list thirty-one late medieval manuscripts but *eVK2,* following Linne Mooney, notes that *NIMEV*'s listing of BodL, MS Ashmole 210, f. 9r is incorrect as the text is different.

copies.[26] These numbers are not particularly remarkable when compared to the survival rates of other Middle English poems: Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* survives in sixteen copies and his *House of Fame* survives in only three manuscripts.[27] But, what is significant is that, for each genre of medical writing, the total number of copies of verse (ignoring how many copies survive of individual texts) is often significantly lower than the total number of copies of their prose counterparts. Medical recipes provide the starkest contrast: as the above count shows, only a handful of individual vernacular verse remedies and one substantial verse remedy book survive and each text only seems to survive in single figures. In comparison, thousands of vernacular prose remedies survive: Voigts and Kurtz's database yields 1925 results when searched for fourteenth and fifteenth-century medical recipes and they have only included within their database groups of three recipes or more, and individual recipes of interest.[28] Of course, some of these results are copies or variations of the same recipes; the task of mapping the relations between all of the extant texts is such a large one that it has not yet been attempted. In other medical genres, though, the number of *different* texts is easier to compare. For instance, whilst only one verse herbal and two poems about rosemary survive, at least ten prose herbals exist: these include *Agnus Castus, Circa Instans,* Henry Daniel's prose *Herbal,* three Middle English translations of Macer's *De virtutibus herbarum*, a text commonly known as *Here Men May See the Virtues of Herbs,* a text on the virtues of betony, and two prose tracts on the virtues of rosemary. This suggests that more adaptation and renewal of prose texts took place.

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[26] E.g., *DIMEV* 2343, 4165, 5977, 847, 1570, 1944, 1791, 1975, 1142, 4168, 4926, 4367, 5650, 6552 and 6614.
[27] *Riverside,* pp. 1161, 1139 respectively.
[28] On Voigts and Kurtz' selection principles, see Rand Schmidt, 'The *Index of Middle English Prose*', p. 428.

There is one verse medical genre, though, which did produce a large number of different examples: charms.[29] The charm for toothache below, composed in verse but copied continuously like prose, demonstrates some of the ways that rhymed verse can function in this genre:

> A goode charme for sore teþe
> In nomine + patris + and filii + spiritus sancti + Amen byfore the gate of Galile . Saynte Petur there sate hee . Vppon a colde marbull stone . And hilde his honde vnder his cheke bone . To hym can owre lorde criste goo<n> Petur he sayde whie sittiste thou soo . Lorde the totheacke dothe me so mycull woo . That I may Lorde no ferthere goo . Arise Peture and goo withe me . And hit schall neuer more efte greve the . Ne no man ne woman . That this charme saye can . Then in the worschippe of oure lorde Ihesu Criste and of his modere Saynte marye and of Saynte peture saye a pater noster Aue maria and a Crede[30]

The rhymes in this charm are simple and monosyllabic, which would have made the charm easy to remember when reciting it; indeed, the fact that charms had to be remembered for oral performance, whereas recipes could be consulted in a book, is probably one reason why charms contain rhyme more often than remedies do.[31] Nevertheless, the scribe's error in copying this text, though small, shows how the use of rhymed verse could encourage *more* rather than less recall errors: carried away by the momentum of 'stone' and 'bone', he copies 'goon' instead of 'goo'.[32] Although the error seems semantically inconsequential, the scribe corrects it by crossing out. Because saying the right thing in the right place in the right way is integral to the efficacy of

[29] E.g., *DIMEV* 789, 1018, 2154, 4322, 4601, 6243, *eVK2* 3274.00.
[30] HEHL, MS HM 64, f. 145ra–145rb.
[31] On charms, memory and semantic motifs, see Lea T. Olsan, 'Charms in Medieval Memory', in *Charms and Charming in Europe*, ed. by Jonathan Roper (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 59–88.
[32] On the ways that verse and rhyme can promote and inhibit scribal accuracy see Wakelin, *Scribal Correction,* pp. 220–27.

charms, he or she may have believed that even the smallest error could have serious consequences.

The rhymes in the charm also create an incantatory rhythm which imbues the words with a sense of occult power. The effect is similar in verse alchemical texts. This connection between charms, alchemy and high numbers of verse texts may help to explain why medical verse survives in smaller quantities than medical prose. Although the apparent efficacy of medical remedies could depend upon occult powers (as will be discussed in Chapter Six), many herb and animal-based cures were grounded in university-approved humoral theory. So, unlike alchemy and charms, which could not be explained through rational means, medicine had a respectable theoretical grounding which might have made it less dependent upon the sensual, emotive and imaginative appeals of mesmeric rhymes.

Other factors could also have affected the popularity of medical verse. George Keiser argues that increased literacy and access to cheaper paper books in the fifteenth century made people less dependent on the oral transmission of recipes and, therefore, less dependent on the mnemonic aid of rhyme.[33] To support this theory, he points to the fact (confirmed by the above list) that, aside from charms, the type of verse medical text for which the greatest number of different examples exist is the verse prologue or epilogue. He argues that, because there would be no practical benefit in memorising these introductions and conclusions, verse must have served a 'primarily ornamental' role in Middle English medical writing, adorning the beginnings and endings of texts.[34] Keiser does acknowledge, though, that the prologues and epilogues are not 'without any

[33] Keiser, 'Verse Introductions', pp. 301–17.
[34] Keiser, 'Verse Introductions', p. 316.

practical purpose' because they 'persuade the reader to look seriously at the prose texts'.[35]

Keiser's theory helpfully shifts attention away from the mnemonic purpose of verse. The fact that individual medical poems such as the verse herbal survive in higher numbers of manuscripts than many other Middle English poems indicates, after all, that they were *not* always memorised: otherwise, why would scribes still need to write them down? In spite of this, the mnemonic aspect of medical verse is often discussed to the exclusion of – and in isolation from – its other qualities.[36] For example, Linda Voigts claims that 'it is artificial to separate prose from verse in considering Middle English medical writings', contending that verse was only considered different from prose because it was 'mnemonic'.[37] Other commentators have similarly subordinated the literary to the utilitarian.[38] For instance, Winston Black suggests that, though medical verse may be 'charming' and 'artful', 'originality was not the goal of composing [it], but accessibility and memorability'.[39] Black acknowledges, in unusually strong terms, verse's aesthetic appeal, but he immediately shifts attention to its practical purpose. The precise means by which aesthetic effects help to fulfil utilitarian functions – or supplement, transcend or even impede those functions – remain to be explored.

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[35] Keiser, 'Verse Introductions', p. 316.
[36] On the importance and high status of memory in medieval culture, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 1–2.
[37] Voigts, 'Medical Prose', p. 317.
[38] See Linne Mooney, 'A Middle English Compendium of Astrological Medicine', *Medical History,* 28 (1984), 406–19 (p. 411) and, for a similar point about alchemical verse, see Timmermann, *Verse and Transmutation,* pp. 18, 20, 21–22.
[39] Winston Black, '"I will add what the Arab once taught": Constantine the African in Northern European Medical Verse', in *Herbs and Healers from the Ancient Mediterranean through the Medieval West: Essays in Honor of John M. Riddle* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 153–85 (p. 157).

Some medieval writers and readers of medical verse also subordinated the aesthetic to the practical. But, in the process, they dwelt upon the pleasant sensual and cognitive effects involved in the experience of writing and reading medical poems. An example is Gilles of Corbeil's comparison of verse and prose in the prologue to his late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century verse uroscopy, *Carmen de Urinis:*

> In hoc autem opere metrice describuntur urinarum praeceptorum traditiones. Metrica autem oratio succincta brevitate discurrens definitis specificata terminis alligata est certitudini; ideoque confirmat memoriam, corroborat doctrinam. Prosaica vero oratio propria subterfugiens libertate turbat memoriam, ignorantiae parit confusionem. Unde, quae certa ratione debent censeri et expresso commemorationis charactere sigillari, potius metricae brevitatis affectantur compendium, quam prosaicae prolixitatis dispendium.[40]
>
> Now in this work, the traditions of the teachers of urines are described. For verse, which takes its path with succinct brevity and is made precise with well-defined terms, is bound to certainty; and thus it strengthens memory and reinforces instruction. But prose, slippery through its very freedom, disrupts the memory and gives birth to the confusion of ignorance. Therefore, the things that should be judged with solid reasoning and sealed with the sharp imprint of recognition strive more for the economy of metrical brevity than the extravagance of prosaic prolixity[41]

The mnemonic advantages of verse over prose are forcefully asserted but, in the process, the aesthetic qualities of the former are emphasised: brevity, precision and succinctness can all be considered useful but they can also be aesthetically pleasing. Indeed, the language of sealing ('siligari'), binding ('alligato'), and strengthening ('confirmat') which Gilles uses to describe the enforcing and empowering effects of verse is pleasantly visceral.

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[40] Aegidii Corboliensis, *Carmina Medica,* ed. by Ludovicus Choulant (Leipzig: Leopoldi Vossii, 1826), p. 3, lines 6–14.
[41] Tavormina, 'Three Middle English Verse Uroscopies', p. 591.

Other medieval accounts also dwell upon the agreeable sensual effects serving pedagogical ends. The following extract is from a thirty-five-line prologue, which is lineated like verse. This prologue survives in only one manuscript and introduces a short Middle English medical treatise given the Latin title *Manuale de Phisica et Cirurgica* by its fifteenth-century scribe*:*

> Þerfore in þis tretys þat namely is of vrynes
> I wole trete togydere boþe theorik and practyk
> Namely of phisyk and sumwhat of surgery
> So liȝtlyere man to draw in to hem boþe.
> And in metir I it make raþer þan in prose
> Þat it be lustiere to lere & liȝtere to kunne[42]

This part of the prologue asserts the practical and cognitive advantages of verse: it makes material 'liȝtere', or easier to comprehend, and 'lustiere', more enjoyable and pleasant to learn. Once again, these advantages are described in aesthetic terms: the word 'lustiere', itself artfully connected to 'lere' and 'liȝtere' by alliteration, does not only declare the experience of reading medical poetry pleasant, but, because in Middle English it literally means 'brighter', it also evokes more formal medieval discussions of aesthetic experience. As Umberto Eco and Peggy Knapp have shown, light was central to medieval ideas of beauty and these theories frequently connect sensual and cognitive experience.[43] Thomas Aquinas argued that for something to be beautiful it needed to possess *claritas* or radiance; Aquinas defined this in many ways but one definition was the quality possessed by an object displaying the 'light of reason' or *lumen rationis*.[44] This connection between light, beauty and cognition would also have been familiar to

[42] BL, MS Sloane 340, ff. 65v–66r.
[43] Knapp, *Chaucerian Aesthetics*, pp. 36–39; Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* (London: Radius, 1988), pp. 102–21.
[44] Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 104.

those unacquainted with the writings of scholastic thinkers: it was embedded in the meanings of words such as English *illuminen* or Latin, *illuminare* , meaning 'to brighten' *and* 'to enlighten morally or intellectually'.[45] By combining pleasure with enlightenment in this way, the prologue evokes the medieval dictum that good poetry should delight in order to teach.

A sense of irony, though, underpins this prologue's account of the advantages of verse. Neither the prologue nor the text of the *Manuale* are actually written in verse, despite the prologue's layout.[46] M. Teresa Tavormina has suggested that the prologue's composer wrote it out in these unrhymed lines with the intention of rhyming it at a later date.[47] The half-rhyme of 'prose' and 'boþe' in the above passage in the very lines where the composer is discussing the text's 'metir' perhaps suggests that he was already pondering how that rhyme might work.[48] For whatever reason, though, the composer never did transform the treatise into rhymed or syllabic verse, meaning that the prologue's claim that the text is written 'in metir' seems oddly inaccurate. A similar irony is detectable in Gilles's prologue: although it explains the merits of verse, the prologue is itself written in prose. Perhaps Gilles considered it a useful meta-discursive mode: by virtue of its difference, prose can introduce and defer the effects it discusses, meaning

[45] *MED, illuminen,* v., entries 1, 2; *DMLBS*, *illuminare,* v., entries 1, 5, 6.
[46] The prologue has irregular line lengths though *pairs* of lines often have a similar syllable count. The lines, each beginning with a majuscule, do not usually rhyme or alliterate and only a few have a medial point like that in alliterative poetry. Ink braces join pairs of lines together, but sometimes they also draw groups of three lines into a visual pattern on the page: in BL, MS Sloane 340, f. 65v, two short lines and a long line are bracketed together before two sets of two long lines and a short line are bracketed together (length here is measured visually). Much of the main text is written in this style and is frequently disrupted by diagrams and lists not in verse. See CMC, MS Pepys 1236, f. 91r (described in Ch. 3, fn. 20) for a medical text with similarly ambiguous verse status.
[47] Tavormina, 'Three Middle English Verse Uroscopies', p. 594.
[48] For another passage from the main text in which the composer experiments with rhyme, see BL, MS Sloane 340, f. 68r: Colre is row and gyleful . wraþing hardy and wastful | Sotil . smal and wakful . drie . lusty . and salowe coloured'.

that, when those effects are eventually felt in the main poem, they are felt even more keenly. Alternatively, both ironies might suggest that the advantages of verse over prose were more rhetorical than actual; asserting them was a convention and not a real-world reality. The prologues were required to train a reader's mind to perceive or – in the prologue to the *Manuale* – imagine from the visual cue of verse lineation, advantages that were not otherwise obvious.

This tension between clear-cut rhetoric and complicated practice can be observed in many late medieval meditations on didactic prose and verse. Influential upon them was Boethius's prosimetric Latin text *De consolatione philosophiae.* In this work, Lady Philosophy suggests that verse and prose perform different roles in Boethius's ethical and spiritual transformation: prose is the medium used to communicate rational thought, whilst verse is the medium which, through its pleasant sensual qualities, prepares the reader for, and relieves them from, the hard, rational work of prose.[49] However, in practice, things are not this clear-cut: as scholars have demonstrated, the metrical passages in Boethius also perform rational work and the prose passages are aesthetically crafted in the sense that they are 'designed by their style to be sense perceptible'.[50]

Eleanor Johnson and Christopher Cannon have shown that this blurring also characterises late medieval adaptations of *De consolatione*. For instance, in his all-prose translation, Chaucer creates a sensual prose style in which rhetorical schemes are used

[49] *Anicii Manlii Severini Boethi Philosophiae consolatio*, ed. by Ludwig Bieler (Turnhout: Brepols, 1957), Bk 1, pr.1, sent. 7; Bk 1, pr. 5, sent. 11–12; Bk 4, pr. 6, sent 5–7. For discussion of these passages, see Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory*, pp. 19–25.
[50] Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory*, pp. 25–37.

to make the logic of the passage perceptible.[51] John Walton, on the other hand, translates Boethius's work entirely into verse: Books 1–3 are composed in eight-line *ababbcbc* stanzas and Books 4 and 5 are composed in rime royal stanzas. Walton writes in the prologue to this translation:

> As fro þe text þat I ne vary noght
> But kepe þe sentence in hys trewe entent
> And wordes eke als neigh as may be broght
> Where lawe of metir is noght resistent[52]

As Daniel Wakelin notes, Walton here makes the 'astonishing admission that for him metrical accomplishment takes precedence [over faithful translation]'.[53] Walton's practice seems in stark contrast to that advocated by the prose historiographers and scriptural translators introduced at the beginning of this chapter: they denigrated verse because they believed the restrictions imposed by its form led to facts and ideas being warped. Walton, however, does not seem to mind that the intricate stanza forms he deploys may have led him to compromise the accuracy of his translation. After Book III, he shifts from eight-line ABABBCBC stanzas to rime royal stanzas which he may have found a slightly easier form to manipulate. This shift is accompanied by the acknowledgement that his 'wittes ben vnmete |The sentence for to saue in metre trewe'.[54] Here, Walton frames the translation problem as a personal deficiency and not as an inherent problem with verse. Indeed, it is notable that he chooses to continue

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[51] Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory*, pp. 37–91; Christopher Cannon, *The Making of Chaucer's English*: *A Study of Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 22–31.
[52] John Walton, *Boethius: De Consolatione Philosophiae,* ed. by Mark Science, EETS os 170 (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), pp. 1–2, stanza 3 (no line numbers).
[53] Daniel Wakelin, 'Classical and Humanist Translations', in Boffey and Edwards, eds, *A Companion to Fifteenth-Century English Poetry,* pp. 171–85 (p. 175).
[54] Walton, *Boethius*, p. 210, stanza 576.

writing in verse rather than reverting to prose, suggesting that he did not seriously believe that the transformative knowledge of Boethius's text would be compromised by the constraints of verse *or* his versifying capabilities. For Walton, the limitations of verse – part of a mock humility topos – again seem to have been rhetorical rather than actual.

So, in all kinds of medieval vernacular and Latin writings, the uses of prose and verse were less distinctly divided than contemporary formulations of their respective uses acknowledge: in their own ways, prose and verse could both perform valuable cognitive and aesthetic work. The various means by which instructional medical verse did this are the subject of the rest of this chapter.

Formal Distinctions

Although modern commentators have been eager to claim distinctive cognitive and aesthetic roles for medical verse and prose, they have devoted little attention to describing the formal means through which they fulfilled these roles. Medieval writers and scribes, however, were sensitive to the formal distinctions between prose and verse and aware that, though medical verse could – like prose – produce both cognitive and aesthetic effects, it did so in distinctive ways.

Consider this headache remedy extracted from a substantial, late fifteenth-century remedy book, which contains a mixture of verse and prose remedies intermingled amongst one another:

> **A** medycyn here I have in mynde . For hedde werke to tell as I fynde . **T**o take ayesell and pulioll ryall . **A**nd camamylle and seethe hit withe all . **A**nd[55] that iouce anoynte thy nassethrellis well . **A**nd make a plaster of that othere deele . **A**nd doo hit in a

[55] The word 'with' may have been missed here by the scribe.

> goode grete clowte . . **A**nd wynd the hedde therewithe abowte .
> **S**o sone as hit is layde thereon . **A**ll the hedde werke awaye schall gon .[56]
>
> [*ayesell* = vinegar; *puliol ryall* = pennyroyal (plant) or wild thyme; *nassethrellis* = nostrils; *clowte* = piece of cloth]

Like the rest of the verse and prose texts in the manuscript, the verse remedy is lineated like prose. This was not uncommon in medieval scribal practice and was often done to save space. This scribe, though, was obviously aware that he was copying verse and signals this by marking each line of verse with a rubricated capital at its beginning (marked above in bold) and a punctus at its end. These visual markers clarify the text's form for the reader. The couplets themselves also seem designed to serve a clarifying function: in his analysis of the function of rhyme in late medieval devotional poetry – another kind of practical verse – Daniel Sawyer emphasises how the alignment of rhyme units with sense units helps to 'emphasise meaning, ease the reading process and aid memory'.[57] The above passage bears testimony to this: each couplet contains within it one or two stages within the recipe. A stage may be straddled across a couplet, as in the list of ingredients in the second couplet, but it never exceeds the couplet. This alignment breaks the recipe into easily processed chunks and means that, as one moves through the couplets, one experiences a satisfying sense of progress. Some medieval readers recognised this clarifying potential of couplets: in the introduction to his fourteenth-century *Chronicle*, Robert Mannyng claims that if he had written the poem in 'ryme

[56] HEHL, MS HM 64, f. 113va.
[57] Sawyer, 'Codicological Evidence', p. 175.

couwee' ('tail rhyme') or 'enterlace' ('intricate rhymes'), or another 'strangere' form than the couplet, 'som [readers] suld haf ben fordon'.[58]

Further evidence of authorial and scribal sensitivity to form can be found in a verse prologue which appears in three manuscripts before a prose remedy book.[59] In one of these manuscripts it is paired with another prologue in prose. The verse prologue is copied after the prose one without any gap between:

> Here bygynneth gode medecyns for alle manere euel / that any man hath in hys body / that gode leches haue ydrawe out of here bokes / that Balent / Archipeus / Ipocras and galyen / For the were the beste leches / that wern in the worlde / And therfore hoso wyll do as thys bok wyl teche / he may be syker . forto haue help of alle eueles / and woundes // Ipocras made thys bok / hoso wylle ther inne loke / goud hyt wyl hym teche / yf he wyl ther inne rede / the ryȝte way hyt wyl hym lede and yf he wyl be a leche / the fyrste way ate the hed he moste begynne / and afterward atte alle othere lymmys //[60]

The fact that the scribe of this manuscript includes both a prose and a verse prologue suggests that he saw them serving different functions. In content, the prologues are very similar: both attribute the collection to esteemed medical authorities and assure the reader that the following collection will help him or her to practise medicine. For the scribe, then, the difference must have been partly formal. This is suggested by the fact that, despite writing both prologues out in lines like prose, the scribe separates the prose and verse with a double virgule and uses virgules to punctuate each text differently: in the prose prologue he uses virgules to mark main and subordinate clauses as well as items in a list, but in the verse prologue, he uses them to separate individual

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[58] Prologue to Robert Mannyng's *Chronicle,* in *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory,* ed. by Jocelyn Wogan Browne (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1995) p. 21, lines 45–54.
[59] The other two manuscripts are BL, MS Sloane 3160, f. 153r; BL, MS Sloane 3466, f. 6r.
[60] BodL, MS Laud misc. 685, f. 72v.

lines of verse. The scribe's virgules highlight to a reader the poem's end rhymes. They do not, however, draw attention to another kind of formal patterning embedded in the poem by its original author. This patterning is better observed by lineating the poem as verse:

> Ipocras made thys bok
> Hoso wylle ther inne loke
> Goud hyt wyl hym teche
> Yf he wyl ther inne rede
> The ryȝte way hyt wyl hym lede
> And yf he wyl be a leche
> The fyrste way ate the hed he moste begynne
> And afterward atte alle othere lymmys

In addition to end rhyme, the composer of the poem makes heavy use of internal rhyme and parallelism: lines two and four are syntactically parallel and contain autorhyme and lines two, three, four and five all contain a construction with the verb *will* at its centre. The fact that the prose prologue beforehand also includes a construction containing *hoso* and parallel *will* constructions ('hoso wyll do as thys bok wyl teche') suggests that one prologue was composed in relation to the other. This comparison points to the different formal choices encouraged by verse and prose: a single instance of parallelism in the prose prologue is repeated across five lines in the verse prologue and combined with other internal patterns. Such concentrated internal patterning is a feature of other verse prologues too. For example, the following verse introduction, again written out like prose, is appended to medical writings in at least nine manuscripts:

> Ypocras this boke made ȝare and sende to þe emperour Sesare wytyþ wel þat þys boke ys gode leche al thyng hit doþ teche .' and do also þis boke þe byt hit techeþ lechys al here wyt of eche

> maner yuel wat hit be as here after sone þou myt se man oþer
> womman þat haþ mater he schal be take into cure[61]

The verse is not only end-rhymed but also contains an internal chiastic rhyme ('leche'/ 'teche'/ 'techeþ'/ 'lechys') that produces a tongue-twister. Something about the form of verse clearly encouraged denser, more concentrated syntactic play: this might be the shortness of the line, in contrast to what Gilles of Corbeil calls the 'prolixity' of prose lines, or it might be the opportunity to engage in visual patterning offered by consecutive lines of verse: the internal play of the above prologues is immediately obvious to the eye when the texts are lineated as verse.

In these verse introductions, this blatant sonic and visual patterning performs the 'ornamental' and 'rhetorical' functions that George Keiser associates with medical prologues. But it can also function in longer medical poems as an important cognitive aid. In fact, Derek Pearsall isolates concentrated syntactic play within the unit of the line as a defining feature of didactic poetry; the verse of 'literary' authors such as Chaucer is, he argues, more often characterised by prolixity and syntactic diffuseness.[62] A stanza from John Lydgate's 'The Dietary' demonstrates how this patterning can be used to communicate and clarify practical content:

> And yiff so be leechis doth the faile,
> Than take good heed to vse thynges thre,
> Temperat diet, temperat travaile,
> Nat malencolius for non adversite,
> Meeke in trouble, glad in pouerte,
> Riche with litel, content with suffisaunce,
> Nevir grucchyng, mery lik thi degre,
> Yiff phisik lak, make this thi gouernance.[63] (97–104)

[61] BodL, MS Laud misc. 553, f. 30v. For a full list of versions, see Keiser, 'Verse Introductions', p. 310.
[62] Pearsall, *Lydgate*, p. 9.
[63] John Lydgate, 'The Dietary', in *MPJL*, p. 705, lines 97–104.

This stanza contains numbered lists (98), parallelism (99, 101, 102) and antithesis (102), all of which might make the verse more memorable. It is also given a satisfying circularity and coherence by the parallel 'Yiff...' constructions in the first and final lines. All of these constructions might be considered 'clarifying', as they are both aesthetically gratifying and cognitively useful, illuminating, underlining and imprinting upon a reader's mind the sense of the passage.[64]

The above examples demonstrate that, in medical writing, verse was more than prose put into lines that rhyme at their end: more thought was invested in the form of the poems. This thoughtfulness can range from the simple but significant aligning of rhyme units with sense units to bolder, more brazen displays of crafting, such as internal patterning and syntactic play. Such features, however unsubtle, demonstrate that medical writers were aware of – and exploited – the different expressive possibilities that verse offered from prose. In the above examples, the meanings produced by the poems' formal features are in harmony with those implied by their content. But this is not always the case.

Complex Relations between Form and Content

Derek Attridge notes that the work of modern literary critics – influenced by New Critical and early formalist schools of thought – often follows an analytical model in which form and content are distinct but complementary: 'It is difficult to verbalize a positive response to the formal features of a [literary] work without using some version of the

[64] In relation to devotional verse, Sawyer, 'Codicological Evidence', p. 175, similarly notes that rhyme can be 'both enjoyable and mnemonically and rhetorically useful – useful because it is enjoyed, and perhaps sometimes enjoyed in part because it is useful'.

scheme whereby sound echoes sense, form enacts meaning'.[65] Attridge argues that, instead, we should see form as a more active and unpredictable producer of meaning: 'instead of being opposed to content, then, form [...] includes the mobilization of meanings, or rather of the events of meanings'.[66] In late medieval medical poems form also mobilises meaning, effect, and affect in a multiplicity of ways. It does not produce a static and fixed meaning and some of the meanings it does produce do not echo or support the instructional content of the poem; it is not always or only a mnemonic aid.

Sometimes disjunctions and complexities in the relationship between form and content seem like creative stylistic choices. This is illustrated by another of John Lydgate's medical poems, 'A Doctrine for Pestilence'. This three-stanza-long text, which instructs readers on how to avoid the plague, survives in nine manuscripts and is always appended to 'The Dietary'.[67] Like 'The Dietary', it appears alongside both practical writings and other kinds of verse.

Before analysing 'A Doctrine', it is necessary to review briefly Lydgate's critical reputation. It is only in recent years that the significance and distinctiveness of Lydgate's poetics has been recognised; his poetry has long been dismissed 'for both its pedestrian content and mediocre style'.[68] Although he composed in a wide-range of forms (including mummings, laments, ballads and narrative poems) and wrote in amatory, devotional, political and satirical modes, Lydgate's decision to write instructional poetry on topics as earthly and everyday as the medical benefits of wine, day-to-day diet, and

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[65] Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 108.
[66] Attridge, *Singularity of Literature,* p. 109.
[67] See *DIMEV* 6586.
[68] Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown, introduction to *Lydgate Matters: Poetry and Material Culture in the Fifteenth Century* ed. by Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 1–11 (p. 1).

children's table manners seems to have decreased his value as a poet in the eyes of modern scholars, even though that advice may have been important and urgent in the fifteenth century. And yet, at the same time, Lydgate's careful shaping of the *forms* of his poems has impressed many critics.[69] Alain Renoir describes Lydgate as 'a competent craftsman' and Derek Pearsall characterises Lydgate as 'a highly skilled craftsman [...] working like a mason or a sculptor or a mural painter'.[70] In Lydgate's scholarly reputation, then, there has been a pronounced tension between intricate form and mundane content.

In the last decade and a half, though, critics *have* begun to appreciate the content of Lydgate's poetry in connection to its form: various critics have connected the intricate forms of Lydgate's poems – particularly his narrative poems, mummings, and occasional verse – to their broader social, cultural, and political significance.[71] Maura Nolan has studied the devotional metaphors in 'A Treatise for Lavenders' and Jake Walsh Morrissey has analysed the form and content of 'The Dietary'.[72] But, aside from these two essays, Lydgate's instructional poetry has received little of the renewed literary critical attention. [73] 'A Doctrine for Pestilence' has been especially overlooked.[74]

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[69] Cooper and Denny-Brown, introduction to *Lydgate Matters,* pp. 4–5.
[70] Alain Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate* (London: Routledge, 1967), p. 17; Pearsall, *Lydgate*, p. 5.
[71] *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, ed. by Larry Scanlon and James Simpson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006) and Maura Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[72] Maura Nolan, 'Lydgate's Worst Poem', in Cooper and Denny-Brown, eds, *Lydgate Matters*, pp. 71–87; Walsh Morrissey, '"To Al Indifferent"', 258–78. See also Anthony Bale, 'A Norfolk Gentlewoman and Lydgatian Patronage: Lady Sibylle Boys and Her Cultural Environment', *Medium Aevum,* 78 (2009), 394–413 on the cultural significance of 'A Treatise for Lavenders'.
[73] Pearsall, *Lydgate*, p. 220, claims that 'literary criticism has no part [in the analysis of Lydgate's instructional verse], except to say that [...] the matter is well suited to the manner'.
[74] E.g., the poem is not discussed in one of the few literary critical treatments of pestilence: Tom Lawrence, 'Infectious Fear: The Rhetoric of Pestilence in Middle English Didactic Texts on Death', *English Studies*, 98 (2017), 866–80. Only the poem's medical content is discussed in Bryon Lee Grisby, *Pestilence in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 126–35.

This is surprising given that, of all Lydgate's didactic poems, 'A Doctrine' is the most explicitly crafted and the most connected to other formally crafted texts: while many of Lydgate's didactic poems – such as 'The Dietary' and 'Stans puer ad mensam' – are more formally simplistic translations or adaptations of earlier instructional verse, 'A Doctrine' is a very close translation of an intricate *ballade* by the French court poet Eustache Deschamps.[75] The two poems are reproduced below side by side:

Who will been holle & kepe hym from sekenesse	Qui veult son corps en santé maintenir
And resiste the strok of pestilence,	Et resister contre l'epydemie,
Lat hym be glad & voide al hevynesse,	Doit joye avoir et tristece fuīr,
Flee wikkyd heires, eschew the presence[76]	Laissier le lieu ou est la maladie,
Off infect placys, causyng the violence;	En frequentant joyeuse compaignie,
Drynk good wyn, & holsom meetis take,	Boire bon vin, nette viande user;
Smelle swote thyng[es] & for his deffence	Port bonne odour contre la punaisie
Walk in cleene heir, eschew[e] mystis blake.	Et ne voist hors, s'il ne fait bel et cler.
With voide stomak outward the nat dresse.	Jeun estomac ne se doit point partir,
Risyng erly, with fyr have assistence,	Boire matin et mener doulce vie,
Delite in gardeyns for ther gret swetnesse,	Faire cler feu en sa chambre tenir;
To be weele claad do thi dilygence.	De femme avoir ne li souviengne mie;
Keepe welle thi-silf from incontynence,	Bains et estuves a son pouoir devie,
In stiwes, bathis, no soiour that thou make,	Car les humeurs font mouvoir et troubler;
Opnyng of humours this doth gret offence,	Soit bien vestus, ait toudis chiere lie,
Walke in cleene heir, eschewe mystis blake.	Et ne voist hors, s'il ne fait bel et cler.
Ete nat gret flessh for no greedynesse,	De grosse chair se doit on abstenir
And fro frutes hold thyn abstynence,	Et de touz fruiz; de la plus grant partie,
Poletis & chekenys for ther tendirnesse	Mangier connins, sa poulaille rostie
Ete hem with sauce, and spar nat for dispence,	Et venoison; partout espicerie,
Verious, vynegre, & thynfluence	Canelle, clous de girofle, pourrie;
Of holsom spices, I dar vndirtake,	Tout d'aigrevin et vergus destremper;
The morwe sleep, callid gyldene in sentence,	Dormir matin. Tout ce n'oublie mie,
Gretly helpith ayeen the mystis blake.	Et ne voist hors, s'il ne fait bel et cler.[77]

[*heires* = airs; *voide* = avoid, rid oneself of, purge of emotion or matter (with medical connotations); *thynfluence* = the influence; *gyldene* = golden]

[75] 'Stans puer ad mensam' is a loose adaptation of a didactic poem on children's table manners in heroic verse by Robert Grosseteste. On the Deschamps identification, see Walsh Morrissey, '"To Al Indifferent"', p. 260.

[76] I have removed an editorial full-stop here which interrupted the sense (see Ch. 3, fn. 81 for discussion).

[77] John Lydgate, 'A Doctrine for Pestilence', in *MPJL*, p. 702, lines 1–24. Ernest Hoepffner, 'Une ballade d'Eustache Deschamps', *Romania,* 50 (1924), 413–26 (p. 414).

Semantically and formally the two poems are very similar. Both use the intricate eight-line ababbcbc *ballade* stanza, both contain a refrain and both produce end rhymes from polysyllabic words such as 'incontynence', 'compaignie' and 'espicerie'. These stylistic choices are not obviously motivated by a desire to produce a memorisable or accessible practical poem. The intricate rhyme schemes and polysyllabic end rhymes are far harder to process and retain than the monosyllabic couplets characterising the verse headache remedy analysed earlier: 'A medycyn here I have in mynde . For hedde werke to tell as I fynde'. Karin Becker therefore seems right to argue that the use of 'the courtly genres of the ballade, virelay and rondeau' in Deschamps' medical poetry suggests that 'it is Deschamps' ambition to combine the practical utility (*utilitas*) of his instruction with the aesthetic principles of a poetical work of art (*delectatio*)'; in these poems, he 'transforms [the] formal patterns of contemporary pragmatic literature into [...] art'.[78]

Becker's isolation of stanza form as the defining characteristic of Deschamps' aesthetic practicality is, however, problematic when one turns to analyse Lydgate's translation of Deschamps' poem: for Lydgate, the eight-line *ballade* stanza was not always a barrier to comprehension and memorisation. He uses the form quite differently in his one-stanza poem 'The Nine Properties of Wine', which also offers remedies for various health problems:

> Wyne of nature hathe properties nyne,
> Comfortythe coragis, clarifiethe the syght,
> Gladdeth the herte this lycor most devyne,
> Hetythe the stomake of his natural myght,
> Sharpithe wittis, gevith hardines in fight,
> Clensyth wounds, engendrithe gentyll blode;
> Licor of licor, at festis makyth men lyght,

[78] Karin Becker, 'Eustache Deschamps's Medical Poetry', in *Eustache Deschamps, French Courtier Poet: His Work and His World*, ed. by Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi (New York: AMS Press, 1998), pp. 209–27 (pp. 219–20, 209).

Scoureth þe palat, through fyne þe color good.[79]

[*scoureth* = cleanse]

In this *ballade* stanza, simple, monosyllabic rhymes are used instead of complex, polysyllabic ones: although the stanza is still less easy to memorise than monosyllabic couplets, one cannot imagine that it would pose too many difficulties to a medieval reader. Lydgate could have translated Deschamps' verse into a stanza stylised like this one. But he chose to develop his own more elaborate, less obviously practical English style.

In fact, Lydgate does not just imitate Deschamps' artful, impractical style: he exaggerates it. Firstly, he uses more polysyllabic, Latinate words than Deschamps. Whilst the latter poet produces more clearly distinguishable a and b rhymes through 'vie'/'mie'/'devie'/'lie' and 'partir'/'tenir', Lydgate favours the similar sounding (and easily confusable) '-esse' and '-ence' rhymes. He only uses one simple or monosyllabic rhyme in each stanza as the c rhyme: at the end of each verse, the refrain word 'blake' is rhymed with 'take', 'make' and 'vndirtake'. This restricted use of simple rhymes was probably intended to make the *ballade*'s refrain stand out. This seems to have been the intended outcome of several of Lydgate's formal decisions when translating Deschamps' poem. For example, he adds to the first stanza of his source the phrase 'eschew the presence', which echoes and foreshadows the refrain 'eschewe mystis blake'. Furthermore, Lydgate throws the former phrase into prominence by splitting the poem's sense across lines four and five: eschew the presence | Off infect placys'. One might consider such enjambment, which is characteristic of Lydgate's verse, artistically

[79] John Lydgate, 'The Nine Properties of Wine', in *MPJL,* p. 724, lines 1–8.

awkward. However, in relation to his longer narrative poems, Phillipa Hardman has recently argued that those peculiarities of Lydgate's syntax which have often attracted negative critical comments might not be 'faulty constructions' but 'stylistic devices, intended to create specific effects'.[80] In this instance, the splitting draws attention to the parallelism between line four and the refrain in line eight, creating a pleasingly symmetrical stanza.

It seems unlikely that Lydgate drew attention to the refrain in this way in order to make the ballade more comprehensible: the ways in which he achieves it – through extensive use of polysyllabic rhymes and the awkward splitting of sense units – make the poem *harder* to follow, understand and retain.[81] The refrain appears more as an aesthestic embellishment. So, by subtly amplifying the stylistic features of Deschamps' poem, Lydgate not only shows that he recognised the distinctive stylistic choices made by the French poet, but also that he wished to experiment with this mode of aesthetic practicality, producing an artefact that contains useful everyday content but is no longer shaped entirely around clarifying it, or impressing it upon a reader's memory. Given that other instructional poems, such as the anonymous verse remedy book and Lydgate's 'Nine Properties of Wine', do seem (at least partly) shaped by those goals, both Lydgate and his readers may have considered poetic form and practical content to be in a novel, playful, and productive tension with one another in 'A Doctrine for Pestilence'. The tension, though, is not absolute: although the poem's form does not aid memory or comprehension, it may still have served a practical function, as Lydgate's careful

[80] Phillipa Hardman, 'Lydgate's Uneasy Syntax', in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England,* pp. 12–35.
[81] The enjambment was so unexpected for one twentieth-century editor – Henry Noble MacCracken – that he placed a full stop at the end of line four: see *MPJL*, p. 702, line 4. Hardman, 'Uneasy Syntax', pp. 16–26 discusses how Lydgate's syntax poses problems for editors.

craftsmanship could have impressed upon readers the need for them to pay equally careful attention to the preservation of their health.

The forms of didactic poems can, then, mobilise meanings in varied and unexpected ways. This is also true of those anonymous poems, such as the verse remedy book, which seem most practically orientated. In these works, it is often harder to see tensions or ambiguities in the relationship between form and content as intentional stylistic exercises, partly because we do not have evidence – as we do for Lydgate – that the authors of these verses could write practical poetry in a different style or were familiar with rhetorical and poetic precepts. Instead the tensions frequently appear as side-effects of writing in verse that were encountered and negotiated by medical writers, but not deliberately cultivated. An example is provided by the vague filler phrases that are frequently employed to complete couplets: after describing the required ingredients, another remedy for a headache in the verse remedy collection discussed above contains this instruction, 'And menge thes togeders sannes delaye. Al so well as euer ye maye'.[82] A sense of irony is created because, after recommending urgency in the first line of the couplet, the poet delays the reader's progress through the text with a second line that is – in terms of practical information – meaningless.

Ironically, the vague filler phrases completing couplets are often concerned with time. Another rhymed cure for headaches in the same remedy book contains a similar phrase:

[82] HEHL, MS HM 64, f. 113vb.

> If man or woman more or lesse . In his hedde have grete sickenes . Or any grevaunce or any wirkynge . Averuayne he take witheout lettynge .[83]
>
> [*averuayne* = southernwood; *lettynge* = delay]

The phrase 'withowte lettyng', though providing a convenient half-rhyme for the tricky 'werkyng', delays readers in their completion of the recommended action, even as it urges haste. Read as circumlocution, these vague fillers undercut Gilles of Corbeil's claim that brevity is one of verse's distinctive features. One might argue, though, that another of Gilles's verse qualities *is* maintained: because the rhyme is satisfied, the mnemonic potential of the verse is upheld. However, the vagueness of the filler phrases does not make them particularly memorable. Several tensions between the theory and practice of writing instructional verse therefore underpin this passage.

Similar tensions are produced by a verse bloodletting text copied earlier in this manuscript by the same hand as the remedy book. This verse, copied in lines like prose, describes the dangers of letting blood when the moon is in the astrological sign of Aries:

> Biware howe thou the body keytte. For the blode may not to faste out fleitte. Iffe the mone in ariete be. Kutte not the hed and thou do byme .[84] And meny leme of the body also Kut not the place the signe longithe to. When that euer the mone <in> that sine be. Kutte not that place and ye do byme. If in all thes thou be hurte . From dethe thou mayste not lightly sturte . Dayes there bethe and howris also. That causithe men to have moche woo. An evill daye and an evill howre. And the signe that dothe no socowre[85]
>
> [*fleitte* = flow; *leme* = limb; *sturte* = escape]

[83] HEHL, MS HM 64, f. 113va.
[84] *Byme* does not appear in the *MED*, but it seems to denote harm and may derive from *bimenen,* to lament or complain (*MED*, *bimenen,* v., entry 1).
[85] HEHL, MS HM 64, f. 13v.

These rhymed lines, which only survive in this manuscript, may have been excerpted from a longer poem, dealing with more of the zodiac. Alternatively, they may have been intended as a supplement or complement to the more comprehensive Latin astrological prose material in the manuscript.[86] They may have been based upon the paragraph in Latin prose that immediately precedes them:

> Caueatis quando luna est in aliquo signno Respondenti membro malum est et maximum periculum ledi in isto membro vt quando est in Ariete malum est ledi in capite et de ceteris membris Et eciam eadem die ut in die lune et in hora eius ut in prima hora diei et octauo et decteris Respice infra de luna quando est in Signis Caueatis a Merte et a Saturno et de horis eorundem.[87]

The first part of this prose text ('Caueatis [...] ceteris membris') corresponds very roughly to the first eight lines of the English verse: both instruct the reader in general terms not to cut the body part corresponding to a particular astrological sign when the moon is in that sign. More specifically, both texts warn the reader against cutting the head and the limbs when the moon is in the sign of Aries. After this point, however, the texts diverge sharply: the prose text instructs the reader on the specific hours which are dangerous. In contrast, the content of the verse text becomes diluted: lines nine to fourteen read as vague, generic truisms ('Dayes there bethe and howris also. That causithe men to have moche woo. An evill daye and an evill howre. And the signe that dothe no socowre'). These lines are void of any specific instructional content: no particular hours are listed. The compulsion to rhyme seems to have taken priority over

[86] On the folio before the English verse text, a zodiac man is accompanied by an explanatory text in Latin prose: see HEHL, MS HM 64, f. 12v. The text accompanying the zodiac man seems to have been based on a version of John Somer's fourteenth-century *Kalendarium:* see *The Kalendarium of John Somer,* ed. by Linne R. Mooney (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), pp. 148–49.
[87] HEHL, MS HM 64, f. 13v.

the obligation to provide any useful information. The poem's refrain ('Kutte not...') – which could have functioned as a mnemonic aid – here only increases the sense of frustrating circularity, of failing to progress towards new knowledge. Perhaps this feeling that the text's verse form had overshadowed and diluted its content was why the scribe only copied (or composed) rhymed lines for Aries, leaving the preceding Latin prose texts and a diagram of a vein man on the following page to explain the rest of the zodiac. This sense of disappointment may be heightened by the fact that the subject of the verse is, once again, time: the focus on 'dayes' and 'howris' draws a reader's attention to the time being wasted through empty rhymes.

Complexities, ambiguities, and disjunctions in the relationship between practical content and impractical form can, then, be a palpable part of the experience of reading instructional verse. That aspect of reading experiences has, however, been excluded from accounts of the poems which assume that medieval writers and readers had a fixed set of ideas about the poems' function, revolving around instruction, accessibility, and memorability, that was not in any way thwarted, challenged, altered or adjusted by the actual practice of writing or reading an instructional poem. Medieval readers, however, were clearly sensitive to frictions between form and content because they noted similar conflicts in other kinds of verse. *The Canterbury Tales* illustrates this awareness through the Host's response to the Chaucer Pilgrim's *Tale of Sir Thopas*, a parodic tail-rhyme romance:

> Thou doost noght elles but despendest tyme.
> Sire, at o word, thou shalt no lenger ryme.[88]
>
> [*despendest* = waste]

[88] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Tale of Sir Thopas*, in *Riverside,* lines 931–32. Future line references are within the text.

The Host makes the same connection between rhyme and time-wasting that is evoked by the empty, time-based rhymes in the medical verse above. He then commands the Chaucer pilgrim to use prose or another type of verse to tell a story that has either 'murthe' or 'doctryne' in it (935). The Host implies that, as a highly-structured, repetitive verse form, tail-rhyme can deprive a work of useful or thought-provoking meaning. His comments resemble the argument of modern detractors of rhyme that rhyme, and other rigid verse forms, can constrain thought and perpetuate fixed, narrow ways of seeing the world, some of which are ideologically or politically conservative.[89] It is, of course, significant that, in the *Tale of Sir Thopas,* Chaucer ridicules tail rhyme and not couplets, a form which he adopted in many of his other, more serious works. Nonetheless, his comments are still relevant to the poems I am examining: the filler phrases Chaucer uses in *Sir Thopas,* such as 'as it was Goddes grace' (723) and 'For sothe, as I yow telle may' (749), clearly resemble the empty lines completing the couplets in the medical poems.[90] By using these phrases more frequently in *Sir Thopas* than in his other writings, Chaucer self-consciously highlights the constraints under which verse forms can place writers. Scholars, however, tend to discuss medieval instructional verse in isolation from verse such as Chaucer's, forgetting that all writers were working within similar constraints: even if they wanted to, writers of instructional verse could not invent a new form that would *only* communicate practical 'doctryne', without any accidental excess, circumlocution, and dilution of content. Chaucer recognised this potential friction between 'ryme' and 'doctryne', between verse form

[89] For summaries of these views see J. Paul Hunter, 'Formalism and History: Binarism and the Anglophone Couplet', in *Reading for Form,* ed. by Susan J. Wolfson and Marshall Brown (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), pp. 129–49 (pp. 129–33) and Simon Jarvis, 'Why Rhyme Pleases', *Thinking Verse,* 1 (2011), 17–43.

[90] Other examples include lines 723, 728, 749, 758, 766, 796, 835, 874, 888–91, 896.

and useful content. So why should we assume that readers of instructional poems did not?

Artfulness

From the above analysis, one might construct an image of medical versifiers as limited in skill and agency, as individuals incapable of negotiating in creative ways the constraints placed upon them by the couplet form. Consequently, they are compelled to deploy conventional filler phrases that are not their own responses to the formal constraints they are confronting but a response supplied to them by a long verse tradition. But this is not the whole story. At times, there are suggestions in the poems of more active and thoughtful crafting. An extract from the verse herbal introduced at the beginning of this chapter will help to illustrate this. In many of the twenty-six surviving versions of this herbal, the poem has been shortened, supplemented, rearranged or adapted.[91] Sometimes this recopying means that the actual content of the herbal changes: for instance, in some versions of the herbal, the flower of centaury is declared red. Given the alleged proximity of purple to red in medieval colour descriptions, this seems like an apt description of the lilac flowers.[92] In other versions, the flowers are incorrectly described as white.[93] Such variations again undermine the insistence of Gilles of Corbeil, and more modern commentators, that verse imprints matter upon the memory more emphatically than prose; in practice, verse cannot prevent changes or errors in

[91] See Ch. 1, fn. 118 for the list of manuscripts consulted.
[92] *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomæus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum*, ed. by M.C. Seymour and others, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975-88), II (1975), Bk 19, p. 1276, line 6.
[93] Compare TCC, MS R.14.32, f. 136r, BL, MS Sloane 140, f. 56v, BL, MS Sloane 1571, f. 23r, and BL, MS Additional 17866, f. 7r (red) to BL MS Sloane 147, f. 97r and SKB, MS X 90, p. 52 (white).

transmission, even when, as in the copying of texts, only a short-term kind of memory is required.

At other times, style instead of content changes. For instance, in most versions of the text I have consulted, a description of the virtues of betony is copied (with minor variations) as 'For the hede ake it abriggith and the bytternes | And castith to the eye bryghtnes'.[94] In one manuscript, though, it is written: 'It brekis þe hede werke | And gifis bryghtnes to þe syth derke'.[95] Both these couplets display evidence of crafting: both contain internal half rhyme ('abriggith'/'castith', 'brekis'/ 'gifis') and end rhyme. They are also stylistically cohesive: the first version is characterised by polysyllabic fullness whilst the second is characterised by monosyllabic clarity. Thought has clearly gone into their composition.

An added layer of thoughtfulness is suggested by the possibility that one version may be a rewriting of the other: the fact that the couplets are structurally similar but stylistically opposite suggests that the variation came about because a scribe adapted what he found before him in an exemplar and not because the exemplar was corrupt. Perhaps the author of the second version found the polysyllabism of the first out of place in an herbal characterised by simple, accessible English and chose to rewrite it. So, although neither of the versions can be compared to the sophisticated couplets of poets such as Chaucer and Gower, they – and their connection to one another – suggest that instructional poets could think actively about stylistic cohesiveness within the unit of the couplet, and could set themselves formal challenges beyond end-rhyme. They also show that an important part of understanding the artfulness of these texts is

[94] TCC, MS R.14.32, f. 136r. 8 out of 18 manuscripts consulted contain this version; 3 contain alternative versions, and 7 do not contain these lines on betony.
[95] BL, MS Sloane 147, f. 96r.

comprehending the sporadic and whimsical nature of that artfulness. There is no clear reason, after all, why one couplet in a practical text should be more thoughtfully crafted or densely patterned than another but this is sometimes the case.

More often than not, though, the poems contain aesthetic effects that cannot confidently be proclaimed the products of active craftsmanship *or* the unintended products of formal constraints. Instead, they appear poised between the two. Consider, again, the verse remedy book. It often contains simple monosyllabic rhymes such as: 'So sone as hit is layde there on. All the hedde werke awaye schall gon'.[96] Elsewhere, however, rhymes seem to work in more sophisticated ways: 'And this dryngke lete hym fastynge dryngke . And all his heddewerke awaye schall syngke'.[97] 'Syngke' is far more specific, somatic and evocative than 'gon'. The same can be said of another couplet that occurs later in the poem: 'all the hedwerk and the acke . In a litill throwe hit schall a slacke'.[98] *Slacken,* suggesting partial relief and diminishment, also has a strongly somatic edge, often being used in Middle English to refer to the loosening of some kind of constraint.[99]

These rhymes pose and evade the question of agency in several ways. On the one hand, the more evocative and vivid verbs 'syngke' and 'slacke' could be evidence that the limited choice of synonyms afforded by the couplet form compelled writers to select less literal and more polysemous or semantically suggestive words than they would in prose. The couplet form is here the generator of an accidental artfulness. On the other hand, the poem's author might here have asserted his agency over the

[96] HEHL, MS HM 64, f. 113va.
[97] HEHL, MS HM 64, f. 113va.
[98] HEHL, MS HM 64, f. 113vb.
[99] See *MED*, *slaken*, v., entry 1(a).

constraints of the rhyme scheme, by refusing to indulge in vagueness, circumlocution or triteness for the sake of an easy rhyme; instead he might have carefully negotiated the limited choices afforded by the rhyme scheme in order to select a word that was still appropriate, precise and evocative. In support of this view is the fact that *sinken* is medically appropriate in this headache remedy: medieval medical theory taught that some headaches were caused by excess humours which produced vapours in the body that then rose up to the head.[100] The headache could be treated by expelling these through openings lower down in the body: in another remedy collection it is written, 'Hit beoueþ þat whan ache lasteþ long in þe heued for to draw matere out be þe mouþ or be þe nose þrilles'.[101] Others recommended diuretics, emetics, laxatives and bloodletting.[102] Describing the relief of a headache as a downward, sinking movement may, then, have been an attempt to recreate somatic experience accurately. In this interpretation, the author chooses a word that, like most poetic language, exceeds the basic referential function of language, in order to describe and evoke a phenomenon more vividly.

The 'dryngke'/'syngke' rhyme draws attention to the tension between agency and compulsion in another way too. *Sinken* and *drinken* are often rhymed together in Middle English poetry. One would assume that this is only because of their similar sound but in fact their meanings were also intertwined: as well as the obvious meanings of downward movement and disappearance, *sinken* could be used in Middle English to

[100] In Trevisa's fourteenth-century translation of Bartholomew of England's *De proprietatibus rerum*, it is written 'Constantinus [seiþ] þat it is good to garse þe legges byneþe, þat þe humours, fumosite, and spiritis þat beþ cause of þe hedeache may be drawe fram þe heed donward to þe neþir parties': Seymour and others, eds, *On the Properties of Things*, I (1975), Bk 7, p. 346, lines 10–13.
[101] BL, MS Additional 34111, f. 40v.
[102] Demaitre, *Medieval Medicine*, p. 124.

describe the movement by which food and drink are taken into the body.[103] This may be why Chaucer used the rhyme in Book II of *Troilus and Criseyde* when Criseyde, feeling the first signs of love, asks herself whether she has been intoxicated:

> Criseÿda gan al his chere aspien,
> And leet it so softe in hire herte synke,
> That to hireself she seyde, "Who yaf me drynke?" (II. 649-51)

The literal meaning of 'drynke' draws out the metaphorical and proverbial associations of 'synke' with drunkenness. In the remedy book a similar effect may be experienced by the reader: 'syngke' interacts semantically with 'dryngke' to evoke the means by which the medical drink is absorbed into the body.

Did the author intend this interplay or was it an unforeseen effect of a common rhyme? We cannot know. This ambiguity over whether the interplay was intentional does not, though, prevent a reader from experiencing its effects: the rhyme assists – through sonic and semantic interplay – in the practical tasks of comprehension and recall, but it is also aesthetically pleasing because the separate lines of the couplet are bought into balance, harmony and intersection in multiple ways simultaneously. In an essay on Alexander's Pope's eighteenth-century couplets, Simon Jarvis argues that we must stop reducing rhyme to a two-dimensional trifle, or careless automatism that 'cannot itself be admitted to be a kind of thinking or involved in noticing'.[104] Rather, rhyme's effects are 'indissociably ideal, conceptual, semantic, syntactic, phonological, phonetic, material, contingent [...] Rhyme sounds on all these instruments at once'.[105] This is not only true of the 'great rhyming authorship[s]' but can also apply, at times, to

[103] *MED, sinken,* v., entry 1(a) and 3(b).
[104] Jarvis, 'Why Rhyme Pleases', p. 24.
[105] Jarvis, 'Why Rhyme Pleases', pp. 19–20.

those practical verses which modern literary canons have marginalised as poems of the least aesthetically appealing or cognitively challenging kind.[106] Medieval medical verse was not always or necessarily 'doggerel'.

Literary Voices and Intertextual Frameworks

The last stylistic aspect of medical verse which I wish to explore is the incorporation of voices familiar from other genres of medieval verse. Allusion and intertextuality are, of course, features of prose medical texts too: as we have seen, the writings of authorities such as Hippocrates, Galen, and Pliny are often cited in prose prologues and sometimes in prose remedy collections and herbals. In verse texts, though, a specific kind of intertextuality is present, which seems more focused on style than content, though the former clearly shapes how the latter is understood.

One example of this type of intertextuality is provided by a tripartite prologue in a manuscript from the second quarter of the fifteenth century; it precedes a large prose collection of English medical recipes entitled *Speculum medicorum*.[107] The three-part prologue consists of an unrhymed verse introduction in Latin, a translation of that into trochaic English verse, and a prose English introduction to the text which is different from, and not a translation of, the preceding verse parts. As Klaus Dietrich-Fischer has shown, the Latin verse part of this prologue, the oldest version of which can be dated to the middle of the twelfth century, was attached to the beginning of different Latin medical treatises, two of which went by the name of *Speculum medicine.* (The collection of remedies in our fifteenth-century manuscript is an English translation of one of these

[106] Jarvis, 'Why Rhyme Pleases', p. 19.
[107] BL, MS Additional 34111, f. 40r-v.

treatises).[108] The English prose part of the prologue (quoted below) is a translation and adaptation of a Latin prose introduction that also circulated with this Latin verse. As far as is known, these English translations of the prose and verse introductions only survive in this manuscript; as George Keiser suggests, they may well be the scribe's own creations.[109]

Like many fifteenth-century medical texts, then, these prose and verse introductions are translations of earlier Latin texts. Consequently, they bear witness to the creative ways in which voice was used in a continuing tradition of verse medical writing:

> Ne tibi displiceat quod sic sum corpore paruus
> Ortulus iste breuis inicia[110] poma gerit
> Plurima doctorum sunt hic experta priorum
> Lecior hic[111] sumas que meliora vides
> Teque quod amplecti quodque cauere decet
> Si fueris diues que sunt preciosa require
> Si nummis careas elige quod valeas
> Nec nos contempnes viles cum videris herbas
> Quod leue compones gracius esse solet
> Celestis medicus cuius manus omnia prestat
> Mirandum prodit quod tibi vile fuit
>
> Mislike it noght to þe þo I be of litel bodi
> For þis litel short begynnyng bereþ profitable þinges
> Many iproued bien here of wisemen befor tyme
> Gladly tak þow here þe þenges þat þou seest best
> Doyng sheweþ where of þe medicines bien
> Draw þo to þe and þat mislykeþ þow fle
> ȝif þow be riche seke þo þat be most worþe
> And ȝif þow wanteþ auer chese þat þou may
> No dispise vs noȝt for foule whan þou seest herbes
> þe leche of heuene whose hond ȝiffiþ alle þing
> Sheweþ wonders in herbes þo it be noȝt so to þe

[108] Klaus-Dietrich Fischer, 'A Mirror for Deaf Ears? A Medieval Mystery', *The Electronic British Library Journal* (2008), 1–16.
[109] Keiser, 'Verse Introductions', p. 305.
[110] A scribal mistake for 'mitia'.
[111] A scribal mistake for 'hinc'.

> Her begynneth a boke þat is clepid þe spectacle of medicines þe wyche wysemen ad seen for helþ of mannes body and þis boke was made and icompild of diuers auctours and be ordre han gadred fro þe heued þat is begynnyng of þe body and be oþer diuers membres suyng to þe soles of þe fete þat curiouse leches may fynd wiþoute trauail and noye liȝtliche what shalle falle to euery membre and þe inseers of þis litel bok shalle haue knowleche and of oþer doctours assayed for soþe þynges þat bien seen profitable and for to wirche liȝt þingges han þese doctours put to þis litel boke þat sekeman shal noȝt long perish and þat leches vnconyng may be holpyn of many þenges[112]
>
> [*auer* = wealth; *inseers* = a reader or examiner]

Both the prose and the verse prologues make use of rhetorical tropes and schemes. The most glaring stylistic difference between the two, however, is the bold use of prosopopoeia in the verse: other verse prologues (examined earlier) personify remedy books as physicians and teachers ('þys boke ys gode leche al thyng hit doþ teche'), but in this introduction the 'boke' or prologue speaks for itself, commanding the reader 'Mislike it noght to þe þo I be of litel bodi'. The playful aptness of a medical text describing itself as a body is clear and the pun is combined in this English verse with the artfulness of internal rhyme ('þe'/'bodi'). In Old English riddles and poems such as *The Dream of the Rood*, inanimate objects are made to speak. In later medieval literary writings, prosopopoeia (understood in the broad medieval sense of an imagined or absent person, abstract concept, or inanimate object speaking) is common, appearing frequently in allegorical writings such as *Le Roman de la Rose.*[113] Several examples of narrators *imagining* what rings or books might say to patrons and loved ones also

[112] BL, MS Additional 34111, ff. 40r-v.
[113] *DLMBS, prosopopoeia,* n., entries 1, 2.

occur.[114] However, very few depictions of books actually speaking survive before the establishment of print.[115]

Speaking books and prologues may be uncommon in late medieval vernacular verse writings and medical verse specifically, but they are non-existent in medical prose. It seems possible, then, that writing in verse encouraged medical writers to engage in greater experimentation with voice. Indeed, listening again to the above prose prologue, one detects other poetic voices too: the poem instructs the reader not to 'mislike' its brevity and, a few lines later, to avoid any remedies that he or she 'mislykeþ', producing an alliterative pattern not present in the Latin original. The words are both in prominent positions, drawing the reader's attention to them: one is the first word of the poem and the other occurs near the centre of the poem's central line. Because of such explicit patterning, it is hard not to hear echoes of the stanza at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde* in which Chaucer addresses his 'litel boke' with the words, 'So prey I God that non myswrite the, | Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge' (V. 1795–96). Perhaps the translator of the medical prologue recalled this stanza not only because Chaucer addresses another 'litel boke', a modesty topos with a long history, but also because he uses apostrophe, a trope which is the opposite of prosopopoeia since it can involve speaking to, rather than speaking as, an inanimate object. Imitations and echoes of the stanza from *Troilus and Criseyde* occur in many later writings, sometimes in unexpected places.[116] For example, as Daniel Wakelin points out, the scribe of a set of ordinances for

[114] E.g. *Secular Lyrics of the XIV^th^ and XV^th^ Centuries,* ed. by Rossell Hope Robbins, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 87, 92.
[115] A Latin ownership note in which a book 'speaks' is discussed in *A Middle English Translation from Petrarch's Secretum*, ed. by Edward Wilson with an introduction by Daniel Wakelin, EETS os 351 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. xviii–xix. Speaking books seem more frequent in printed Tudor works: e.g., the prologue to an English translation of Erasmus's *The Manual of a Christian Knight*: see *Enchiridion militis Christiani* (London, 1552), f. A1r.
[116] Wakelin, *Scribal Correction*, p. 30.

London's Mercers' Company between 1442–3, composes a rime royal stanza in imitation of Chaucer's, which jokingly compares the scribe's civic production to Chaucer's poetic creation: 'Go litel boke go litel tregedie | The lowly submitting to al correcc*i*ou*n'*.[117] Although the scribe of the Mercer's stanza seems to be playing off a sense of incongruity between poetic terminology and form and the form or diction of civic discourse, the copying of the stanza demonstrates that scribes of all kinds of text could be interested in stylistic exchanges and experimentation. If the above medical prologue is also intended to echo Chaucer's stanza, or the body of later poetry imitating that stanza, then that translator has been similarly inventive in his imitation, adapting expressions of worry about scribal inaccuracy to worries about offensive medical compilations.

It is easy to see why writing in verse – a form that is explicitly musical and invites oral performance – may have sensitised poets' minds to the possibilities of vocal play. Verse, more than prose, invites one to consider *who* is speaking and to whom. We see this in medieval romance where verse texts (in contrast to prose ones) often begin with a minstrel-like proclamation such as 'A sang ich schal you singe…'.[118] In verse medical texts, though, this vocal play sometimes seems to encourage a particular kind of uncertain and doubting voice. For example, at the end of Chapter One, we saw how the author or a later scribe of a verse herbal included within the poem rhymed lines in which a speaking 'I' framed himself as a writer and reader who was uncertain about the authority of his exemplar:

> Whe*þer* it is soth or it ne is
> I seye noȝt but as þe bok me wys.
> Þe autow*ur*s name þat þis wroth

[117] Wakelin, *Scribal Correction*, p. 30. Transcribed in full in P.R. Robinson, ed., *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts,* 2 vols (London: British Library, 2003), I, 58.
[118] *King Horn*, in Herzmen and others, eds, *Four Romances of England*, line 3.

Þe bok wythnessit ryth noth[119]

These lines might reflect the anxiety of a real scribe and reader, but the 'I' which speaks them is also a construct and a product of the verse medium and its connections to orality: hence the construction 'I seye noȝt' rather than 'I write not'. It is possible that this explicit declaration of uncertainty, which is not paralleled in the confident attributions of prose herbals, was facilitated and partly encouraged by verse's self-conscious oral style as that first-person oral framing immediately encourages a writer to consider his or her own relationship with, and attitude to, the knowledge he or she has received: it frames that knowledge as mediated, transmissible and potentially corruptible. A similar uncertainty is also detectable in other parts of the verse herbal. After a list of the various medical and miscellaneous virtues of henbane, the following lines are usually copied:[120]

But of henbane be kendes thre
I am in dowte qwich he schulde be
For ther is of hem rede . yelwe . and blake
And all ben wykkyd of odour and smake[121]

[*smake* = taste or smell]

The uncertainty in this passage contrasts with the precise, detailed or certain descriptions of plant varieties that one finds in other sections of the herbal and in prose

[119] Stephens, ed., *Extracts in Prose and Verse,* p. 378, lines 951–54.
[120] On sources for the miscellaneous tricks using henbane, see Jake Walsh Morrissey, 'An Unnoticed Fragment of *A Tretys of Diverse Herbis* in British Library, MS Sloane 2460, and the Middle English Career of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus' *De Virtutibus Herbarum'*, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 115 (2014), 153–61.
[121] TCC, MS R.14.32, f. 139v. See also BL, MS Additional 17866, f. 12r; BL, MS Sloane 1571, f. 28r; BL, MS Sloane 2457/2458, f. 4v; TCC, MS R.14.51, f. 41v; CMC, MS Pepys 1661, p. 303 (variant phrasing). A similar expression of uncertainty occurs on SRL, MS X. 90, p. 67, edited in Stephens, ed., *Extracts in Prose and Verse*, p. 382, lines 1065–69: 'Of hennebane arn spycys iij. | I schal ȝow telle whyche it be, | There is red ȝelw and blac [...] No ferþere tellyth þe bok of here kende'.

herbals. It is understandable why the author of these lines may have been wary: black henbane – which has toxic and narcotic properties – was treated with caution in many Middle English herbal writings. In the fourteenth century English translation of Bartholomew of England's *De proprietatibus rerum,* it is proclaimed 'venemous'.[122] However, it is still significant that, instead of glossing over this uncertainty or omitting the passage entirely, the writer draws explicit attention to it with the line 'I am in dowte qwich he schulde be'. This voice parallels that of the kind of 'dull' narrator which David Lawton claims characterises late medieval poetry: he describes this narrator as '"lewed", "rude", lacking in "cunnyng" [...] in a word dull'.[123] We see different versions of this kind of bumbling, uncertain narrator in the writings of many fourteenth and fifteenth-century European writers, such as Chaucer, Machaut, and Hoccleve. One particularly close parallel for the above passage occurs in Chaucer's *House of Fame*, where the narrator – paraphrasing contemporary scientific writings on dream lore – recounts different types of dream:

> Why that is an avision
> And why this a revelacion,
> Why this a drem, why that a sweven,
> And noght to every man lyche even;
> Why this a fantome, why these oracles,
> I not; but whoso of these miracles
> The causes knoweth bet then I,
> Devyne he; for I certeinly
> Ne can hem noght...[124]

[122] Seymour and others, eds, *On the Properties of Things*, II, Bk 17, p. 977, line 11. See also *A Middle English Translation of Macer Floridus de viribus herbarum*, ed. by Gösta Frisk (Upsala: A.B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1949), p. 173, lines 9–14. Another herbal, *Circa Instans,* does not contain any such warning, but it does not mention the different varieties at all: see, e.g., BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 125.
[123] David Lawton, 'Dullness and the Fifteenth Century', *ELH,* 54 (1987), 761–99 (p. 762).
[124] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The House of Fame*, in *Riverside*, lines 7–15.

Just as the flowers of henbane can be red, yellow and black, a dream can be a vision, a revelation or a phantom. In both instances, explicit attention is drawn to the narrator's uncertainty or 'dowte', to his inability to sort, process and apply the information he receives. Lawton claims that Chaucer uses such dullness as 'a playful means of making authorship and authority [...] problematic', and this reading is certainly applicable to the *House of Fame*: the narrator's uncertainty shows that the scientific theories of *auctores* do not always fit the experience of the layman.[125] In contrast to Chaucer, the author of the passage on henbane probably did not wish to make authority problematic as part of a rhetorical point; if he was genuinely unsure about the three varieties of henbane and unable to consult another source, he perhaps considered it safer to communicate uncertainty to his readers than simply to omit the material. Nevertheless, it seems plausible that he was encouraged to include such uncertainty within his herbal, a genre that, in its prose form, usually dealt with certainties, because the speaking 'I' encouraged by verse's musicality immediately framed such knowledge as mediated and uncertain, and because a voice characterised by doubt and struggling with questions of textual integrity was already widespread in late medieval literary verse.

The distinctive modes of communicating medical content which verse promoted are not, then, superficial or inconsequential, as they shape how that content, and the authority behind it, are understood by readers. My final example illustrates how the pronounced orality characteristic of verse also shapes and complicates the way that the *purpose* of the medical text is understood. In a manuscript copied in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, the verse herbal discussed above is copied after a

[125] Lawton, 'Dullness', pp. 762–64.

poem on bloodletting. The two are connected by the rubricated lines: 'And now and ȝe wollen dwelle | The uirtues of the lylye I schal ȝow telle'.[126] In these lines, the two poems are reimagined on the page as oral performances within a physical space where an audience might 'dwelle'. Similar rubricated links have also been copied by the scribe of this manuscript between the sections on different herbs. A selection of these are transcribed below:

> And now and ernest and an game
> I schal telle the virtues of henbane
> [....]
> Withouten any envie
> Y schal telle of astrologye
> [...]
> Do now and ful the bolle
> And ȝe schal here of pympurnolle
> [...]
> And now ȝong and al so holde
> Takeþ hede of the uirtues of marigolde[127]

These links extend the oral element already present in other copies of the herbal: we now not only have a speaking 'I', but an 'I' who makes reference to props such as a drinking bowl ('bolle') and an in-house audience ('ȝong and al so holde').[128] These links might be rare evidence that the herbal was intended to be performed aloud from the codex as entertainment for an audience.[129] And yet, in the late medieval period, this framing could also function as a stylistic convention of romances, chronicles, and lyrics,

[126] BL, MS Sloane 2457/2458, ff. 2r–v.
[127] BL, MS Sloane 2457/2458, ff. 4r–6v. In the eighteen manuscripts consulted this is the only copy containing these links.
[128] Although these links have (to my knowledge) received no literary critical attention, Jake Walsh Morrissey, 'Unpublished Verse Rubrics in A Middle English *Receptarium* (British Library, MS Sloane 2457/2458)', *Notes and Queries*, 61 (2014), 13–15, has noted a few similar verse rubrics later in the manuscript which introduce individual recipes.
[129] On evidence for public readings in late medieval England, see Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

rather than as evidence of, or stimulus for, a real-world performance.[130] It is hard to tell and the rubrics might have functioned in both ways.

Whichever way it was transmitted, the text's pronounced orality could have served a practical purpose: it draws a reader's attention to the information the verse conveys by addressing them in an entertaining way. But it should not be reduced to that purpose entirely: entertainment could have been a goal in itself and the insertions could have been a conscious creative adornment, diversifying the rhetorical texture of the herbal by drawing it closer to other types of verse writing. The rubrication of the additions certainly functions as a visual adornment.

There is, of course, always a danger with verse that one will overread the text: the smallest hint of (re-)arranging language to produce rhyme and rhythm is liable to make a close reader see the evidence and effects of crafting everywhere. In this chapter, I have tried to avoid falling into these traps and to acknowledge the 'simplicity' of the poems by recognising that the formal patterning they contain is sometimes less subtle, intricate or consistent than that in other literary works. However, such simplicity is not incompatible with complexity: the tensions and shifting dynamics sometimes palpable between the avowedly practical content of the verse and its crafted forms mean that the writing, copying and reading of the poems should not automatically be considered straightforward, unproblematic acts. Sometimes the form will assist in communicating and clarifying content, but at other times it will impede or distract from that content, or supplement its communication with added entertainment and aesthetic pleasure. This may seem obvious: forms, literary or otherwise, never just fulfil a single purpose. But

[130] E.g., see 'Fill the boll, butler', in *Medieval English Lyrics: A Critical Anthology,* ed. by R.T. Davis (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), pp. 276–77. See also Robert Mannyng's fourteenth-century *Chronicle,* in Wogan Browne, ed., *The Idea of the Vernacular,* p. 20, lines 3–6.

when it comes to didactic verse, we must not overlook this, distorting the complex ways in which a seemingly simple form can work in practice in favour of an established, but unnuanced, mnemonic model. The next chapter shows that the forms of these poems' prose counterparts – which have been subject to even greater dismissal – are also simultaneously straightforward and complex, useful and useless, formulaic and yet imaginative.

Practical, Impractical and Aesthetic Elements:

Prose

While scholarship has tended to define too strictly the formal characteristics, cognitive usefulness, and aesthetic effects of medical verse, it has made little attempt to define the same aspects of medical prose. This lack leaves medical prose to be defined by what it is *not,* suggesting that, aside from not containing any regular rhyme or meter, it has no distinctive qualities. This, however, is not true. As we shall see, there are some formal structures, such as extensive lists, which suit the formal properties of prose better. Furthermore, although they are not exclusive to prose, some linguistic and imaginative structures such as similes and puns appear far more frequently in medical prose than verse. Like verse, all of these structures can fulfil *and* fail to fulfil practical functions. Furthermore, they can do so in highly affective or playful ways.

The previous chapter also demonstrated that verse forms encouraged specific types of intertextual borrowing in medical writing, particularly in the deployment of voice. This chapter develops that interest in interconnectedness by showing that some of the seemingly specific figurative language used in prose recipes is, in fact, commonplace and also appears in more consistently and aesthetically crafted texts by writers such as Chaucer and Julian of Norwich. I will not suggest that this use of the same figurative language signals a deliberate borrowing from poetic discourse, as might have been the case in some of the verse examples. Instead, I shall suggest that all of these discourses – poetic, medical and devotional – need to be resituated within a culture where figurative and crafted language were not the property of one particular

type of writing but were used in various kinds of writing for distinct but overlapping purposes.

Tracing these connections and overlaps will contribute to a revised conception of the position of medical language within medieval textual culture. A substantial amount of scholarship has shown that medical language was used in political, devotional and poetic writings in order to represent other experiences metaphorically.[1] But medical language was also hybrid: it was receptive to the influences of other cultural languages and participated with these in shared, commonplace modes of creative expression. Re-establishing these interconnections will allow us to read canonical poetic texts in more nuanced ways too: seeing how the images and structures of those texts are used in medical writings illuminates the semantic range of those structures and promotes a subtler understanding of the various ways that they could have been interpreted.

Syntactic Structures: Lists, Chiasmus and Repetition

Lists are not exclusive to scientific prose but, for purposes of clarity and comprehension, they do often seem better suited to prose than verse. Consider Chaucer's *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*, a parody of alchemical recipes and treatises, which is written in rhymed decasyllabic verse and is well-known for its extensive, overwhelming lists of alchemical ingredients and processes. In that tale, Chaucer aims to show the impenetrable, jargon-heavy nature of alchemical discourse: the Yeoman, who proclaims that he cannot

[1] E.g.; Singer, *Blindness and Therapy*; Michael Leahy, '"To Speke of Phisik": Medical Discourse in Late Medieval English Culture' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London, 2015); Daniel McCann, 'Medicine of Words: Purgative Reading in Richard Rolle's Meditations on the Passion', *The Medieval Journal,* 5 (2015), 53–83 (though, as McCann shows, medical and spiritual experiences are intimately related).

'reherce' the items within his list in 'ordre', knows the alchemical terms but not their semantic relation to one another.[2] The verse form heightens this sense of confusion for readers: because the terms are jammed into the rhythm of a ten-syllable line, readers have little opportunity to try to decode the jargon before the next term, or line, is upon them. Chaucer's poem therefore illustrates the formal tension between verse lines and extensive, overrunning lists of polysyllabic terms; the two forms do not always fit easily together. Prose, being unbounded, is a more appropriate form for rendering such lists clear and comprehensible. This probably explains why verse remedies and herbals usually only contain short lists featuring a few ingredients: 'For hedwerk [...] takyn eysyl pulyole ryale | And camamylle and sethe with all'.[3] In contrast, prose recipes sometimes include much longer lists of five or more ingredients: 'tak sayn wormode aueroygne tansey yuy tereste betoyne egrymoyne'.[4] It is not, then, merely extra-textual factors, such as efficacious plant combinations or the purchasing powers of patients, which determine the content of a recipe: the prose or verse form determines how many ingredients are used and the structures through which those ingredients are communicated. Once again, verse and prose are not merely passive moulds into which medical material is deposited, but active shapers of that material.

A list might appear to be a mundane, unimaginative and narrowly functional structure, merely recording the ingredients required for a cure by stringing nouns together consecutively, as in this prose remedy for headaches: 'Take bitayne verveyn

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[2] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canon's Yeoman's Tale,* in *Riverside,* line 786. On craft discourse, see Christopher Cannon, 'Chaucer and the Language of London', in *Chaucer and the City*, ed. by Ardis Butterfield (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006), pp. 79–95 (pp. 82–89).
[3] Stephens, ed., *Extracts in Prose and Verse,* p. 350, lines 18–20.
[4] YM, MS XVI. E. 32, f. 15v.

celidony wormwod weybred ruw walwort sawge fyue cornys of peper and hony'.[5] But, even in this list, care has been taken to order and organise the items: the first eight ingredients are plant-based, while the last two comprise a spice and an animal product. In contrast, other lists mingle together ingredients of very different kinds, as in this remedy for head pain: 'take encence and coluere dunge and whete floure' ('take incense, dove excrement and wheat flour').[6] Recipes like this bring different kinds of spices, plants, and animal products into contiguity as well as different areas of cultural life: outside of medical practice, incense, associated with religious rituals, would not be associated with dove excrement or faeces. As Michel Foucault proclaims, lists can '[break] up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things'.[7] As Chaucer's *Canon's Yeoman's Tale* demonstrates, medieval writers were aware of this potential in lists for disorder.

Lists, which were deployed by many different types of medieval poets, could also prolong a particular lyric or narrative moment, amplifying it in the manner recommended in the *artes poetriae.* [8] Alternatively, a poet might deploy a list to display the extent of his or her learning about a subject or to create an enchanting rhythm. Lists function in both of these ways in *The Canon's Yeoman's Tale*: the relentless additions of impenetrable specialist terminology eventually draw the reader or listener's attention away from the content of the list and onto its musicality. Sometimes one finds a similar

[5] WT, MS Wellcome 136, f. 1r.
[6] WT, MS Wellcome 136, f. 1v.
[7] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994; first published 1966), p. xvi. For a more in-depth analysis than Foucault's of the ways lists create order and disorder, see Eric Griffiths, 'Lists', in *If Not Critical,* ed. by Freya Johnston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 8–28.
[8] Stephen A. Barney, 'Chaucer's Lists', in *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in English Literature in Honour of Morton W. Bloomfield*, ed. by Larry D. Benson and Siegfried Wenzel (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1982), pp. 189–223. Barney focuses upon Chaucer's lists but also comments on lists in other literary, encyclopaedic, homiletic, satirical and scientific literature.

tension between sound and semantics in medical recipes, as in this extract from a remedy for wounds, swellings and other external injuries:

> Take bugle, synagle, avance, violett, waybrede, lely & henbayne & morell, gume of the sour plumtre, wax, white pik þ*a*t thir spicers calles pik albu*m* & fresche grese of a swyn or a bare & fresche suete of an herte & fresch talghe of a moton, of ilkan elike mekill. Do all thies thynges in a pan & welle tham wele.[9]
>
> [*bugle* = herb of the mint family; *synagyle* = European sanicle; *avance* = plant of the genus Geum; *waybrede* = plant of the plantain family; *lely* = lily; *morell* = a herb of the Solanum family; *white pik* = resin; *suete* = fat; *talghe* = fatty tissue, tallow; *welle* = to boil]

The vernacular plant names in remedy books are often more commonplace than the esoteric alchemical terms in Chaucer's poem. Nevertheless, the author of the above remedy feels compelled to explain that apothecaries also refer to 'white pik' using the Latin term 'pik album'. This suggests that the remedy writer foresaw that the multitude of English, Latin, and French words for one substance might confuse a reader, turning that part of the text into empty noise. In fact, even if a reader were comfortable decoding the recipe, sound play might have drawn his or her attention away from its content: aside from the sonic echo 'welle tham wele' (which shall be discussed in more depth later), there are also the half-rhymes 'bugle' and 'synagle' in the list of ingredients. The frequent occurrence in recipes of variations of the threesome 'bugle, pygle, sanygle' suggests that it was a formulaic and popular pattern. [10] Even more

[9] Ogden, ed., *The "Liber de diversis medicinis"*, p. 54. Quoted in Orlemanski, 'Jargon and the Matter of Medicine', p. 419 where Orlemanski comments on the importation of Latin and French words, rather than the sound play. Her essay does explore, though, similar sound play in parodic recipes.

[10] Similar patterns appear on BodL, MS Douce 84, ff. 37r, 40r; BodL, MS Ashmole 1444, pp. 179, 180; BodL, MS Hatton 29, ff. 82v, 84v, 86r; BL, MS Harley 2378, f. 143r; BL, MS Harley 1602, f. 20r; BL, MS Additional 33996, f. 143r; HM 58, ff. 62v, 85r–v; HEHL, HM 19079, ff. 3v, 4v.

explicit sound play occurs in the tripartite repetition 'fresche grese [...] fresche suete [...] fresch talghe'. This structure has a parallel in a remedy for poor hearing, which requires 'þe fressh grece of a fressh blak ele of the fresshe water'.[11] These echoes and resemblances – often altered or distorted – suggest a shared love of sound patterning, but they might also imply a complex web of borrowing, modification, and hybridisation: the remedies, copied and recopied in close proximity to one another, are woven through with subtle and perhaps unconscious echoes of each another.

The fragments of rhythm that this sound play creates also evoke the more explicit rhythms of verse charms. This parallel suggests that, even if the content of the lists might not have healed anybody, their rhythmic form, created by the explicit patterning, may have pleased readers and patients. Furthermore, their proximity to verse charms may have convinced patients that the rhythms possessed an intrinsic, unexplainable and occult healing power. As modern research into the placebo effect has shown, thinking that one will be healed can be a vital part of healing oneself.

Authors and scribes were keen to maintain these crafted structures. Daniel Wakelin has shown that scribes of recipe collections sometimes revisit syntactic doublets that they have copied in order to insert prepositions into the doublet, which is a kind of short list. Examples include: 'Take the Ius of verneyne and ^of^ celidoyne' and 'kutt w*it**h* swerd or ^w*it**h*^ knyfe'.[12] As Wakelin points out, these additions can be necessary to clarify the meaning of an instruction: in the first example the preposition indicates that it is the *sap* of both plants which is to be used. [13] In the second example, though, the added 'with' does not make the instruction any clearer; instead, the

[11] BL, MS Additional 19674, f. 46r.
[12] Wakelin, *Scribal Correction*, p. 206.
[13] Wakelin, *Scribal Correction*, p. 206.

preposition seems to have been added in order to create a pleasingly balanced structure. There are other examples of lists in remedy collections where practical concerns seem to shade imperceptibly into a more gratuitous concern with stylistic crafting. Consider this list in a remedy for a healing salve. Rubricated characters are reproduced in bold; a photo can be consulted in Figure 3 of the appendix:

> **T**ake brokkyis grece **/ k**attys grece **/ h**aris grece* swynys grece **/ d**oggis grece **/ c**apouns grece **/ s**wet of a der **/ s**chepis talwe of eche ylyche moche **þ**en take þe ius of bismalue **/ o**f rewbarbe* of morel **/ o**f comferye **/ o**f daysyes **/ o**f Rewe **/ o**f plawnteyne **/ o**f matithen **/o**f heyryffes **/ o**f matfelon* of dragaunce of eche ylyche moche[14]
>
> [*bismalue* = marsh mallow; *comferye* = comfrey; *matithen*[15] = erroneous spelling of *matfelon*; *heyryffes* = one of the dodder plants; *matfelon* = knapweed; *dragaunce* = dragonwort]
>
> *end of line in manuscript

As in the example above, the author or copier of this remedy has taken great care to clarify that the sap of each plant is to be used by adding 'of' before each noun.[16] The repetition, then, is useful but, along with the repetition of 'grece', it also creates a pleasing rhythm. Moreover, the scribe has gone to extra lengths to highlight the repetition: not only does he place virgules between each genitive construction but he also rubricates each virgule. It is only at line breaks that virgules are not added. This attention to the recipe's formal crafting exceeds the requirements of practicality; the

[14]BodL, MS Douce 84. f. 38v.
[15]*MED*, *mate-feloun,* n.; variant spelling listed as *matifoun*.
[16]Similar repetitions occur in BodL, MS Douce 84, ff. 38r, 42r, 43r, 44r.

scribe appears as a literary critic, drawing the reader's attention to the text's formal patterning by making that pattern visual as well as sonic.[17]

Lists are not the only syntactic structure in recipes which bring the practical and the aesthetic into conversation. In fact, sometimes structures seemingly designed to serve a practical function end up, because of their pleasing complexity, impeding the reader's comprehension of the recipe. The following extract is from a remedy for a migraine:

> Then grynde all þe forsayde materys on a marbull stonne till hit be as þik as a thynne pappe. and if hit be to þik be vertu of þe floure .' þen put a litell more of þe glayre þerto. and if be to thyn be vertu of þe glayre .' þen þik hit with more of þe floure. til hit be as þik as a thyn pappe.[18]
>
> [*pappe* = porridge; *glayre* = egg white]

Antithesis, chiasmus and parallelism are all at work in this carefully crafted remedy. Like the scribe who used virgules to draw attention to the syntactic patterning of a list, this scribe has used punctuation (in the form of the punctus and the punctus elevatus) to draw attention to the repetition of clausal structures and the juxtaposition of 'floure' and 'glayre' and 'þik' and 'thyn'. These juxtapositions and repetitions may well have been intended to make the recipe easier to comprehend or recite by heart. They may also be an echo of more consistently patterned academic medical writings. For example, in a fifteenth-century English translation of Gilbert the Englishman's *Compendium*, the different prognostic tokens associated with similar diseases are distinguished in this way: 'And in epilencie, tremblyng of þe bodi is an yuel signe, but in þe palesie it is a good

[17]See Orlemanski, 'Physiognomy and Otiose Practicality', 194–218, for similar points about gratuitous, excessive or unhelpful aspects of physiognomic manuals. However, Orlemanski does not focus on the manuscript presentation of the texts.
[18]BodL, MS Douce 78, f. 11v.

signe. Fomyng here is a good signe, but in appoplexie it is an yvel signe.'[19] This structure, with its simultaneous emphasis upon similarity and difference, suits the text's learned predilection for drawing precise distinctions between different ailments and symptoms. This academic, scholastically-influenced style may have inspired the above passage but it is noteworthy that in this remedy book, concerned predominantly with quick-fix remedies, the structure has been deployed to explain a practical, hands-on process rather than the more cerebral act of diagnosis concerning Gilbert's learned, theoretical text.

The chiastic structures in both of these texts seem like a useful means of convincing the reader of the importance of making precise distinctions in practice and theory. In this respect, they function rhetorically. The structures are also peculiarly performative: merely reading or listening to their repetitions and juxtapositions makes a reader or listener feel as though he or she has already made the distinctions and cognitive judgements that the structures describe. A similarly performative effect is produced in other theoretical medical texts, when the authors string words together in order to communicate to the reader onomatopoeically a particular kind of bodily substance, movement or feeling: for instance, Henry Daniel claims that the surface of a specific type of bloody urine is 'as hit were gobatysch and cloddyssh and chiprysshe that in phisyke ys cald trumbous' (as if it were lumpy, full of blood clots and fragments, which in medicine is described as *trumbous'*).[20] These tongue-twisting half-rhymes reproduce sonically the thick, clotted texture of the urine. Sometimes, though, syntactic patterning serves no obvious mimetic function but seems designed instead to produce the *feeling*

[19] Getz, ed., *Healing and Society*, p. 21, lines 10–13.
[20] HEHL, MS HM 505, f. 119v.

of accumulating knowledge: in Trevisa's translation of Bartholomew of England's *De proprietatibus rerum,* a type of head pain is described as 'p*icch*inge and prickenge, brennynge and ringinge'.[21] The repetition of the '-ing' ending, a common pattern in Bartholomew's text, might draw a reader or listener's attention towards the fact that important diagnostic information is being communicated but it also distracts him or her from that content: the repetition does not mimic all of the sensations described; instead, it just makes the reader *feel*, with each accumulated '-ing', that they have accrued a new insight into the pain. Consequently, the accumulation of knowledge is simulated, but not necessarily stimulated by the patterning. This parallels the way in which the prologue to the *Manuale de Phisica et Cirurgica* (discussed in Chapter Three) encourages a reader to imagine the cognitive benefits of verse without those benefits actually being present.

It is possible, then, that crafted syntactic structures did not always help readers interpret instructional texts, but only made those readers think they had helped. Sometimes, the structures may actually have hindered comprehension. Because the chiastic structures above are composed from clauses that are almost but not quite the same, they can obscure the very distinctions they are designed to clarify: when reading or reciting the lines from memory it is easy to lose one's place, think one has misread a particular clause, or confuse the elements within the structure, accidentally replacing one ailment, ingredient, or adjective with another. Other remedy books also contain examples of syntactic structures that, if designed to communicate, clarify and impress

[21] Seymour and others, eds, *On the Properties of Things,* I, Bk 7, p. 344, line 18.

healing knowledge, do not appear to have been successful in fulfilling that function. One example is this remedy for epilepsy:

> Do hym þat hase the ewyll clene be schryfen and do hym drynke tytemal with ale or with watyr and doyn hym saye a pater noster and an aue and late hym noght slepyn an howre efter þat / and if the ewyll comme aʒeyn do hym drynke a noder titemall temperred with the iuce of rwe and do hym sayn thwo pater nosters and thwo aues and hyf hafe it the thyrde tyme do hym drynke annoder tytemall with rewe iuce and centorye and doyn hym sayn thre pater noster and thre aues and if he hafe ^it^ the <thyrde tyme> fowrte tyme do hym drynke anoder tytemall temperde with the ivce of rewe centurie and egrimome and say iiij paternosters and foure aves and if he haf it the v tyme do hym drynke anodyr tytemal temperde with the iuce of rewe, ^e^grimome and suyele Et dicat v pater noster et v aue and þat he sleipe noght efter þat he hase taken the medycyn be the space of an owre[22]
>
> [*tytemal* = a plant of the genus Euphorbia; *aue* = Ave Maria]

Each time the illness returns, a new ingredient is added to *titimal* and, in the manner of a nursery rhyme, the entire structure is repeated. Perhaps the recipe was originally transmitted orally and this repetition helped with memorisation. The recipe seems far easier to follow and remember than the chiastic text above. And yet even this simple patterning does not prevent the scribe from missing out the ingredient 'centurie' during the recipe's fifth and final repetition.

Repetitive syntactic structures do not only fail to impress knowledge; they can also actively mislead scribes and readers. The following instruction occurs after a long list of ingredients have been given in a recipe for an ointment treating wounds:

> and put al þes in a body of glas and close hym wiþ a lymbik and set hym in balneo or yn fumo viij . dayes and . viij . nyghtis þen take þe

[22] TCC, MS R.14.39, f. 56v.

> body and hit þe bottom and let it dry and þan set on þe hede and set hym in a furnel of askis and gif hym an esy fire and þer wil arise a watir and þe nexst oyl and þen gyue hym a bettir fire and þer wil arise <a watir> bame The furst is gode þe second is better. The þirde is best.[23]
>
> [*lymbik* = vessel for distillation*; balneo* = water bath; *furnel* = small furnace; *bame* = balm*]*

The parallelism in these lines causes the scribe's eye to skip upwards. Consequently, he copies 'þer wil arise a watir' for a second time when he should have written 'þer wil arise bame'. As in the above remedy for epilepsy, the recipe's repetitive syntax seems, in a written context, to have acted as a hindrance to comprehension and not an aid. It is not, then, just verse forms such as couplets and eight-line stanzas which are imperfectly practical forms, but also the extended syntactic arrangements which prose lends itself to: sometimes the very forms that seem most carefully crafted to promote comprehension, clarity and retention are – on account of that crafting – the ones that hinder it.

Similes

This conclusion not only applies to the syntactic structuring of prose recipes, but also to the way that the texts use figurative language. Figurative language is used in remedies at two levels. Firstly, it can structure the actual content of the cure. For example, a cure for kidney stones copied in numerous late medieval manuscripts requires the reader to disembowel a cockerel, remove the stones in the cock's stomach, crush them, and drink

[23] CUL, MS Kk.6.33, f. 76r.

them with wine.[24] This cure is structured like a metaphor: the crushed stones from the cock's stomach stand in for the stones in the patient. The logic of the cure seems to be that, because the crushed stone from the cock represents and foreshadows the crushing or dissolving of the human stone, it will actually bring that destruction about. A is B; like cures like.[25] This kind of homeopathic cure did not accord with the predominant humoral theory but it was nonetheless common in all kinds of therapeutic medical writing, including more theoretical, academic writings.[26]

Secondly, figurative thinking underpins some recipes' descriptions of the ailments and processes involved in preparing cures. Head wounds are likened to a 'spynand webbe blewe or ellys rede' or 'a burbyl of water when þat it raynes'; a patient's strained urine is compared to the way in which the 'eues of an house dropiþ [rainwater]'; cloths used to apply medicines are to be shaped like a 'litel scheld' and pinned like a 'dublet' ('doublet'); finally, the faeces of a patient suffering from dysentery are likened to 'þe shauyng of parchemyn'.[27] These similes come from a range of remedy collections. The comparisons, though, are most common in theoretically framed collections such as Gilbert the Englishman's *Compendium*, where they, often presented as diagnostic aids, are a consistent part of the text's style. As we shall see, similes also appear in Latin and vernacular uroscopy texts and in encyclopaedic works such as

[24] E.g. BL, MS Harley 2378, f. 138r; BL, MS Additional 12056, f. 27v; BodL, MS Radcliffe e. 10, f. 21v; BL, MS Sloane 1315, f. 136v; HEHL, MS HM 1336, f. 23v.
[25] On the role of resemblance in medieval and early modern knowledge construction, see Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp. 19–28; Sheila Delaney, *Medieval Literary Politics: Shapes of Ideology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 19–41.
[26] E.g., in the Middle English translation of Gilbert the Englishman's *Compendium* in WT, MS 537 – which Faye Getz suggests may have been produced in a monastic context – cherry and plum stones are used to treat human gallstones: see Getz, ed., *Healing and Society*, p. 254, line 4 and p. lii.
[27] Respectively BodL, MS Ashmole 1444, p. 179; TCC, MS O.1.13, f. 69v; Getz, ed., *Healing and Society*, p. 254, lines 13–14; TCC, MS O.1.65, f. 252v; TCC, MS O.1.65, f. 252v; Getz, ed., *Healing and Society*, p. 191, line 22.

Bartholomew the Englishman's *De proprietatibus rerum*, which describes the physiology of body parts and the causes, signs, and symptoms of diseases.[28] The less theoretical, vernacular remedy collections seem to have absorbed influences from all of these genres. Consequently, similes appear within them but less consistently. Furthermore, although there is no apparent reason for it, the comparisons are far more common in prose than verse. The only simile I have encountered in a verse remedy compares ringing in a man's ears to the sound of horns being blown.[29] Perhaps this imbalance is simply the result of the fact that fewer verse remedies appear to have been composed.

Like the syntactic structures examined above, these descriptive similes seem designed to function as communicative tools. How successfully they fulfil that function depends in part on their ability to represent real-world phenomena with vividness. This requirement, not always clearly fulfilled, brings the remedies into conversation with more consistently poetic writings, also concerned with the powers and limitations of figurative language. Medieval writers would have been familiar with the idea of figurative language as a shared ground between writings on different subjects: in the classes on grammar and rhetoric offered to most schoolboys, figurative language was portrayed as fundamental to any kind of eloquent and crafted composition, regardless of its topic.[30] However, though grammar and rhetoric had this in common, they offered quite different representations of figurative language.[31] In grammatical handbooks used

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[28] For a guide to uroscopy texts, see M. Teresa Tavormina, 'Uroscopy in Middle English: A Guide to the Texts and Manuscripts', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 11 (2014), 1–154.
[29] TCC, MS R.14.51, f. 2r.
[30] Murphy, 'The Arts of Poetry and Prose', pp. 42, 50–51, 52–53, 62; Copeland and Sluiter, eds, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric,* p. 1.
[31] For details, see Marjorie Curry Woods, 'A Medieval Rhetoric Goes to School – and to the University: The Commentaries on the *Poetria Nova*', *Rhetorica,* 9 (1991), 55–65; Copeland and Sluiter, eds, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric,* pp. 1–60; Suzanne Reynolds, *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric and the Classical Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 17–41; Murphy, 'The Arts of Poetry and Prose', 42–67; Martin Irvine and David Thomson, '*Grammatica* and Literary Theory', in Minnis and

in schools, figurative constructions and patterned language were treated in the same section as barbarisms and solecisms. Tropes and artful syntax were portrayed as deviations from the grammatical norm, which only differed from barbarisms and solecisms because they had been deliberately (not erroneously) produced in order to cultivate a specific aesthetic or rhetorical effect.[32] When learning about these structures, schoolboys studied examples from Latin poetry: these ranged from Virgil's *Aeneid* to more overtly instructional texts such as the *Distichs of Cato,* a collection of proverbs.[33] A compilation of formulaic and pithy structures, this latter text has more in common with recipes.

Similar examples from classical poets and orators were used in the study of rhetoric, often defined by medieval writers as spoken or written eloquence.[34] In rhetoric, though, tropes and syntactical manipulations were represented less as deviations from the grammatical norm and more as embellishments that could be added to the surface of any text in order to adorn it.[35] This model influenced *artes poetriae*, such as Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova* which divides the composition process into these stages: first comes the gathering and selection of material; then comes the ordering of it and the decision about how much weight to give each element by amplifying or abbreviating it; after, comes the addition of ornaments of style (types of

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Johnson, eds, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism,* pp. 15–41, and Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Schools: From Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 86–127.

[32] I use 'trope' here in the modern sense of a figurative construction. See Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, pp. 21, 36–37 on finer classical and medieval distinctions between 'tropes' such as metaphor and allegory (in which words are used to mean something other than their literal referents) and 'figures of thought' such as simile and personification (where there is often a less explicit transferral of meaning between two things). The boundary, though, often blurs.

[33] Cannon, *From Literacy to Literature*, pp. 159–98.

[34] *MED, rethorike,* n., entries 1(a), 2(a).

[35] Copeland and Sluiter, eds, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, p. 28.

figurative and patterned language); finally comes advice on memorising and performing the composition.[36] Within this model, and in many medieval reflections on rhetoric, tropes and figures are presented as ornaments, as clothing or a kind of sweet exterior wrapped around the selected matter: Geoffrey of Vinsauf claims that meaning should wear a 'precious garment' ('pretiosum [...] amictum'), whilst the fifteenth-century English poet John Lydgate speaks of 'rethoriques sueete'.[37]

However, just as the roles of verse and prose were more multifaceted than meta-discursive discussions suggest, the uses and effects of figurative and patterned language were more complex in practice than these analogies imply. For example, in *De doctrina christiana*, St. Augustine puzzles over his response to a series of metaphorical representations of the Church in the Song of Songs:

> Sed quare suavius videam quam si nulla de divinis libris talis similitudo promeretur, cum res eadem sit eadem que cognitio difficile est dicere et alia quaestio est. Nunc tamen nemo ambigit et per similitudines libentius quaeque cognosci et cum aliqua difficultate quaesita multo gratius inveniri.
>
> Exactly why this picture gives me greater pleasure than if no such imagery were presented by the divine books, since the topic is the same, and the lesson is the same, it is difficult to say; this, however, is another question entirely. But no-one disputes that it is much more pleasant to learn lessons presented through imagery, and much more rewarding to discover meanings that are won only with difficulty.[38]

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[36] Faral, ed., *Les arts poétiques,* pp. 197–262 for Geoffrey's Latin treatise; for an English translation, see Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*, trans. by Margaret F. Nims, rev. edn (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2010), pp. 19–80.

[37] Faral, ed., *Les arts poétiques*, p. 220, line 756; John Lydgate, *Fall of Princes,* ed. by Henry Bergen, EETS es 121–4, 4 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1924–27), I (1924), Bk 1, line 72. See also Copeland and Sluiter, eds, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, p. 33.

[38] Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, ed. and trans. by R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 62–63.

Augustine's initial declaration that the subject and lesson would be the same in metaphorical and non-metaphorical versions seems to reaffirm that figurative language is merely outer clothing serving only to produce readerly pleasure. However, Augustine's second statement acknowledges the important cognitive role that the metaphors play: they shape how the reader learns, ensuring that he or she does so with difficulty, effort and reward. Upon closer inspection, this fundamental shaping role also emerges in the *artes poetriae*. In the P*oetria nova*, tropes such as personification and apostrophe are not included in the section on ornaments of style but in the preceding section on *amplificatio* and *abbreviato:* they are part of the structural process through which different parts of the text are given different weight within it. They therefore shape how much importance a reader attributes to a particular matter. Moreover, it is telling that this poetic handbook begins with an analogy comparing the planning and invention of a poetic composition to the plan a builder makes before beginning to build his house: the fundamental first stage of composition – without which composition cannot begin – cannot be explained to the reader without analogy.[39] Consequently, figurative language appears less as superfluous ornament and more as a foundation for any successful communicative act.

Just how integral writers considered figurative language to be to successful exchanges of knowledge is demonstrated by the eagle in Chaucer's *House of Fame*. In an oft-cited passage, the eagle explains to the dreamer the properties of sound through a series of analogies with fire, water and other things. He precedes these analogies with the introduction:

[39] Faral, ed., *Les arts poétiques,* p. 198, lines 43–48. On Chaucer's use of this analogy, see Cannon, 'Form', pp. 177–90 (pp. 177–79).

> Now herkene wel, for-why I wille
> Tellen the a propre skille
> And a worthy demonstracion
> In myn ymagynacion[40]

In Middle English, *imaginacioun* was semantically wide-ranging. It could connote – in the closest echo to its modern meaning – a creative resourcefulness or a more pejorative artfulness.[41] But it also had a narrower meaning: it was commonly used to refer to the area in the brain where mental images formed from sense data were created and retained.[42] The *imaginacioun* was therefore central to cognition: without it, information from the senses could not be turned into usable or retainable knowledge.[43] So, by locating his analogies (which are combinations of these mental images) within the imagination, the eagle is not just emphasising their artfulness but is also emphasising how fundamental to teaching and learning such figurative constructions are.

The similes in medical texts can also be considered pedagogical aids that are meant to teach the reader how to diagnose, prognose and treat afflictions. For instance, in one fifteenth-century remedy collection, there is a prognostic text for a head wound which contains two of the similes introduced earlier:

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[40] Chaucer, *The House of Fame,* in *Riverside,* lines 725–28.
[41] *MED, imaginacioun,* n., entries 3(a), 3(c), 3(d).
[42] *MED, imaginacioun,* n., entry 1(a).
[43] On the cognitive and emotional capacities of the imagination, see Palmén, *Richard of St. Victor's Theory of Imagination,* pp. 13–49; Aranye Fradenburg, 'Imagination', in *A Handbook to Middle English Studies*, ed. by Marion Turner (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 15–32.

> if þou se þer on abouyn [the head] as it were a boll of water
> þan it is a seyn of dethe and if þou se befor þe tey as it were
> a spynand webbe blewe or ellys rede þat is a seyn þat þe
> bon of his brayn is brokyn þat is a seyn of hasty dethe[44]
>
> [*boll* = bubble; *tey* = dura mater]

The head wound is compared to a spider's web and to the surface of water disrupted by a bubble. In the same text in other recipe collections, the wound is compared more specifically to 'a burbyl of water when þat it raynes', which suggests that the head wound was supposed to resemble a pool of water disrupted by bubbles produced by incoming raindrops.[45] This added detail, along with the specification that the web-like structure be blue or red, conveys a sense of precision. The similes are not, of course, intended as transparent windows onto reality: the repetition of 'seyn' ('sign') in the above passage reminds one that, just as the markings on the patient's body foretell his or her fate, these similes stand in, or act as a 'seyn' for, an extra-textual reality. By likening unfamiliar bodily phenomena to familiar phenomena from the everyday world, the medical writer vividly draws out the crucial characteristic of the bodily phenomenon, be it its web-like structure or uneven surface, in order to enable the reader to identify with confidence and precision the nature or outcome of the ailment.

The similes often liken aspects of medical treatments to things from domestic environments, such as clothing or armour. For instance, in one late medieval recipe for improving digestion, the cloth used to apply the medicine is to be 'mad in þe manere of

[44] BodL, MS Ashmole 1444, p. 179.
[45] TCC, MS O.1.13, f. 69v. Versions also appear on BL, MS Harley 2378, f. 145r; HL, HM 58, f. 63r–v; HEHL, HM 19079, f. 5r; WT, MS London Medical Society 136, f. 8v; HEHL, HM 64, f. 144ra, in which the scribe has misread *tey,* the *dura mater*, for *teeth*, making that part of the simile: 'And if thou see byfore hit as hit were tethe or as hit were a bloo spynynge webbe or redde'.

a litel scheld þat may keuere þyn stomak'.[46] The same cloth should be laid 'flat to þyn stomac [...] and broched croswyse in þe manere of a dublet'.[47] A little later, a cloth used to make a plaster is also to be fixed with a brooch 'in þe manere of a dublet'.[48] Doublets were clothing items worn in different varieties by most social classes and so were things, along with spider's webs, which one might reasonably expect to find in most medieval households. Many vernacular remedy books were probably owned by wealthy households and used within those domestic spaces. It seems possible, therefore, that some of this imagery was designed to reflect that environment. Indeed, even the shield, which, with its heraldic connotations, would have been familiar to but not owned by every one of these households, is domesticated, becoming 'a litel scheld'.

Sometimes, these similes seem to have been specifically associated by late medieval writers and translators with the vernacular scientific voice. For example, Gilbert the Englishman's Latin *Compendium medicinae* often contains highly graphic, figurative language in order to help the reader identify afflictions correctly. However, as Faye Getz notes, many more figurative passages are added to the fifteenth-century English translation: one such passage – which again makes explicit use of familiar, domestic imagery – is the following definition of vertigo: vertigo 'makeþ a man semen þat al-þinge þat he seeþ as it semeþ to dronken men: þat þe house goeþ aboute hem and þat þe weie riseþ vp aȝenst hem'.[49]

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[46] TCC, MS O.1.65, f. 252v. Another version occurs in BL, MS Harley 2378, f. 28r.
[47] TCC, MS O.1.65, f. 252v.
[48] TCC, MS O.1.65, f. 253v. In BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 244, another copy of the recipe says the linen should be 'ybrochyd a lityl as a paltok' ('doublet').
[49] Getz, ed., *Healing and Society,* p. xlvii. The passage in question occurs on WT, MS 537, f. 52v. Other studies have explored how continental medical writers added homely figurative images to vernacular versions of Latin texts: e.g., Chiara Crisciani, 'Histories, Stories, Exempla and Anecdotes: Michele Savonarola from Latin to Vernacular', in *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Siraisi (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), pp. 297–324.

Vernacular uroscopies also contain a vernacular voice that is *distinctively* figurative. These texts often follow on from or are embedded within remedy collections.[50] In most uroscopies, the colour of the urine is identified through two means: through a colour term and a simile. In the same way that medical recipes compare the thickness of preparations to porridge,[51] or instruct the reader to boil ingredients 'as thou woldest a pece of beef',[52] urine is often compared to everyday foodstuffs such as cabbage stalks, apples and milk and to everyday substances such as ink and lead. The same colour terms and similes appear across the corpus of uroscopy texts. These colour descriptions derive from classical Greek and early medieval Latin texts.[53] In these earlier versions, though, the colour-terms and the similes are in the same language; in the Middle English uroscopies, however, the colour-term remains in Latin, while the simile is translated into the vernacular. For example, in a frequently copied uroscopy, the colour 'subrubycundus' ('reddish') is explained through the image 'vryne colowre as a blase of fyre'.[54] This means that, even though they are present in the Latin texts too, these Middle English figurative images look like glosses on the Latin terminology explicitly designed to help the vernacular reader decode an unfamiliar Latinate medical vocabulary.

[50] E.g. TCC, MS O.1.65, ff. 265v–69v.
[51] E.g., a recipe to make a 'gummed clothe' (a cloth soaked in a mixture of gums) copied in numerous collections commands the reader to stir several ingredients together 'tyl þou haue strewed it inne all togyder riȝht as þou woldest strewe flour in to a chyldes papelotes' ('porridge'): see TCC MS O.1.13, f. 54r. For other examples see CUL, MS Dd.6.29, f. 87r; CUL, MS Dd.11.45, f. 132v; BodL MS Ashmole 1443, p. 279; BL, MS Harley 2378, f. 18r.
[52] BL, MS Additional 19674, f. 25v.
[53] On some sources, see *Medieval Medicine: A Reader,* ed. by Faith Wallis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), p. 256.
[54] TCC, MS O.1.65, f. 269v. This text survives in 69 manuscripts: for a comprehensive list, see Tavormina, 'Uroscopy in Middle English', p. 15.

It is clear, then, how the similes might function as practical communicative aids, explaining unfamiliar medical phenomena through familiar domestic ones. The similes might also serve a rhetorical purpose, persuading readers to translate the text into action. This is because they seem to offer medical practitioners a means of creating a common language of diagnosis and prognosis. When establishing what was afflicting a patient, the medieval practitioner normally depended upon his or her ability to read the visual and tactile clues presented by the exterior of that patient's body.[55] The senses, though, are fallible and subjective. These comparisons with common phenomena present the reader with an attractive means of moving subjective, sensual experience towards the objective and verifiable. This would help the practitioner and the patient feel more confident in the former's act of diagnosis and prognosis, just as the similes explaining parts of the treatment process would give readers the confidence to try to translate the text into action: they would feel more certain that they understood how to do so correctly. In medical similes, then, the comparative marker 'like' carries a significant amount of rhetorical weight, reassuring the reader by making explicit to them the cognitive path from familiar to unfamiliar that they are being guided along.

This rhetorical weight, however, is not recognised in Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova* which suggests that similes are less artful than metaphors because such comparative markers draw attention to the simile's formal construction:

> [...] Respice quaedam
> Juncta satis lepide; sed quaedam signa revelant
> Nodum juncturae: collatio quae fit aperte
> Se gerit in specie simili, quam signa revelant
> Expresse. Tria sunt haec signa: magis, minus, aeque.

[55] Faith Wallis, 'Medicine and the Senses: Feeling the Pulse, Smelling the Plague and Listening for the Cure', in Newhauser, ed., *A Cultural History of the Senses,* pp. 133–52.

> Quae fit in occulto, nullo venit indice signo;
> Non venit in vulto proprio, sed dissimulato,
> Et quasi non sit ibi collatio, sed nova quaedam
> Insita mirifice transsumptio, res ubi caute
> Sic sedet in serie quasi sit de themate nata
> [...]
> [...] Plus habet artis
> Hic modus, est in eo longe sollemnior usus[56]
>
> Notice that some things are joined deftly enough, but certain signs reveal the point of juncture. A comparison which is made overtly presents a resemblance which signs explicitly point out. These signs are three: the words more, less, equally. A comparison that is made in hidden way is introduced with no sign to point it out. It is introduced not under its own aspect but with dissembled mien, as if there were no comparison there at all, but the taking on, one might say, of a new form marvellously engrafted, where the new element fits as securely into the context as if it were born of the theme [...] This type of comparison is more artistic; its use is much more distinguished.[57]

The distinction Geoffrey makes is between forms such as metaphor, allegory and synecdoche, which present one thing as another without drawing attention to the transferral that has taken place, and forms of comparison, such as similes, which draw explicit attention to the act of craftsmanship that has drawn the two things together. This distinction is implicit in more general attitudes to artistic crafting: as scholars such as Glending Olson and Jenni Nuttall have shown, it was often writers who were consistently metaphorical and allegorical who were described as *poets* by their contemporaries.[58]

This comparison with the *Poetria nova* is an important reminder that, though recipes can be more artfully crafted and have more in common with poetic discourse than has been acknowledged, the differences between medical and poetic discourse

[56] Faral, ed., *Les arts poétiques,* pp. 204–5, lines 242–63.
[57] Nims, trans., *Poetria nova,* pp. 26–27.
[58] Olson, 'Making and Poetry', 272–90; Nuttall, 'Poesie and Poetrie', 1–5.

should not be elided and the former should not always be subordinated to the standards, judgements and precepts of the latter. Although they overlap, the two discourses retain distinctive rationale for their stylistic choices and priorities. Comparing them, however, does allow us to illuminate these choices in more detail.

Problematic Practicality

The similes may have been crafted to fulfil a practical purpose but, like couplets and elaborate syntactic structures, they are not perfectly practical forms. One thing that might encourage a reader to question the precision – and therefore the usefulness of the similes – is the fact that the *same* similes appear across the corpus of scientific writing, suggesting that there was a body of go-to images for scientific writers. Take the example of the spider's web**.** This simile is used in Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe*: as well as comparing the astrolabe to a hairnet, Chaucer draws out the etymology of the word *rete* (which means 'net' or 'web' in Latin) by declaring that the rete of the astrolabe is 'shapen in manere of a net or of a lopweb after the olde descripcioun'.[59] The image recurs frequently throughout the history of medical terminology. It underpins the Latin medical term *rete mirabile* ('wonderful net' or 'web') which was originally coined in Greek by Herophilus in 3 or 4 BC to refer to the web of blood vessels at the base of the animal brain he was dissecting (it was erroneously used by later writers to describe human anatomy).[60] Much later, in the anatomical section on eyes in his encyclopaedic text *De proprietatibus rerum*, Bartholomew of England glosses an image used in a Latin

[59] Geoffrey Chaucer, *A Treatise on the Astrolabe*, in *Riverside*, Part I. 21.2–3.
[60] *Herophilus: The Art of Medicine in Early Alexandria: Edition, Translation and Essays*, ed. and trans. by Heinrich von Staden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 179.

medical term to describe the first of seven tunics encircling the eyeball: in John Trevisa's fourteenth-century translation, this gloss is rendered as '[þe first tunic] hatte *tela aranea*, as it were "þe webbe of an attercoppe"'.[61] The image often seems to have been associated with eyes: the term *web* was used metaphorically in most medical texts to describe cataracts or other filmy growths across the lens of the eye.[62] However, it could also be used to represent vastly different bodily phenomena: we have already observed that it was used to describe a head wound and, in a prognostic text describing the urine of a leper, it is written, 'When ye looke [upon the urine] at the .3. ^de^ daye there wyll appeere abowe the vreyne as hit were a coppewebbe'.[63]

In examples such as the rete of the astrolabe or the web of blood vessels, it is easy to see why the spider's web image has been chosen: it bears a clear resemblance to the thing it is describing and is sometimes also etymologically connected to the Latin term. And yet the repetitive and conventional nature of the image, which is applied to things as different as a head wound and the surface of urine, might make one question just how precise it really is: did the image represent the particularities and oddities of human bodies very accurately? Not everything, after all, can look like a spider's web. Some writers and copyists of medical texts seem to have recognised this danger. For example, in his vernacular uroscopy, the *Liber Uricrisiarum,* Henry Daniel undoes a traditional simile which translates the Latin colour term *lacteus* as 'as it were of milk', by writing:

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[61] Seymour and others, eds, *On the Properties of Things,* I, Bk 5, p. 178, lines 21–22. For the Latin version of the simile, see Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *Tractatus de proprietatibus rerum* (Nuremberg, 1483), Bk V, Section V.
[62] *MED, web,* n., entry 3(a).
[63] HEHL, MS HM 64, f. 173r.

> And his kallid lactea and mylke white // not for it is white as mylke . For so white is none vrin // but for hit gothe moste tawarde mylke[64]

Daniel points out the simile's figurative imprecision in order, ultimately, to make it more precise. Some medical writers dealt with this imprecision by adding extra details to the similes: for instance, in one copy of a uroscopy text, the standard simile for *lacteus* is changed to the more specific comparison 'as mylke wanne hit is cold'.[65] Similarly, whilst one copy of a uroscopy text translates the Latin colour *inops* (*oenopus*, 'wine coloured') as 'colour of lyuer' ('colour of liver'), another scribe or writer has chosen to translate this as the colour of 'a manis lyuer . or to olde r*e*de wyne yt*ur*ned i*n*to blackenes'.[66] This example shows that writers also tried to counter the imprecision of similes by offering multiple similes. This is the tactic adopted by Henry Daniel himself in a passage where he uses the spider's web simile to describe a type of urine. The urine is not that of a leper (as it is in the above remedy book) which again suggests that the image was a conventional one, reused in different contexts:

> And apperyth mykyll vpon that [urine] as hit is seyde // Sometyme lyke as broþe of browes // And sumtyme ther gaddryth a boue þe vryne lyke powdere that were strawen þere on . or ellys lyke an arayns webbe in so mychill þat one may takyn hit of fro þe vryn with a yarde or a stykke right as þou seyst in a fessell with hote potage[67]
>
> [*broþe of browes* = type of broth; *arayns webbe* = spider's web; *fessel* = vessel*; potage* = soup, stew or porridge]

[64] HEHL, HM 505, f. 54v.
[65] BodL, MS Ashmole 1393, f. 58r. Quoted from M. Teresa Tavormina, 'The Twenty Jordan Series: An Illustrated Middle English Uroscopy Text', *American Notes and Queries,* 18 (2005), 43–67 (p. 62).
[66] BL, MS Sloane 7, f. 59v (quoted from Tavormina, 'Twenty Jordan Series', p. 60) and WT, MS 537, f. 18r (see Tavormina, 'Twenty Jordan Series', p. 61, n. 99 for other variants).
[67] HEHL, HM 505, f. 112r.

The surface of the urine is first compared to broth, then to the surface upon which a powdery substance has been strewn; next it is compared to a spider's web and finally it is likened to the surface of one's stew or porridge. Perhaps Daniel felt that accumulating these similes would help him to create the most vivid image possible of the urine. The repetition of 'sometyme' suggests that the succession of images was partly an attempt to capture the subtle changes and variations occurring in the urine's appearance. However, each new simile simultaneously reads as an admission of the previous simile's limitations, of its inability to convey the urine's appearance with sufficient nuance or detail. It is also significant that the similes nearly come full-circle: the sequence begins with a comparison to broth and ends with an image of a broth or stew-like substance. This suggests that Daniel found himself tracing and retracing a confined range of comparisons, all of which were highly appropriate and yet not quite appropriate enough. So, like couplets and repetitive syntactic structures, the simile does not function as a perfectly practical form in medieval medical texts and was not perceived to do so by medieval writers.

Interconnectedness

Some of the comparisons used in medical writings are not just commonplace in scientific texts but also in other kinds of medieval writing. For example, in the uroscopy examined above, the appearance and texture of a certain type of urine are likened to specks of dust visible in the sunlight:

> and ȝif þere chewe þerinne as yt were smale motys as ben in þe sonne it betokeneth a rewme in þe heued / defnesse / posse / and heuynesse[68]
>
> [*chewe þerinne* = appears in the urine; *motys* = motes; *rewme* = watery fluid; *posse* = head cold]

Atthomi, meaning 'motes', are discussed in early medieval Latin uroscopies and commentaries.[69] However, similes *explicitly* likening the particles to specks of dust in the sunlight seem to be a characteristic of late Middle English uroscopies, appearing in texts such as Henry Daniel's *Liber Uricrisiarum* and, as the above example shows, *The Twenty Jordan Series*.[70] It does not appear (as far as I am aware) in earlier Latin, Greek, and Arabic urine texts.[71] Medieval illustrations frequently depict physicians holding urine aloft for inspection and many critics have assumed they are holding it up to the sunlight.[72] One might speculate that this simile was inspired by that process. And yet, as M. Teresa Tavormina notes, references to light in uroscopy texts are ambiguous: Henry Daniel warns against examining the urine in over-bright light and cites the recommendation of Isaac Israeli (d. 932 AD) for examining the urine in candlelight instead.[73] A more obvious source for the simile is, therefore, a commonplace image which appears in multiple Middle English texts and usually connotes abundance.[74] Chaucer's Wife of Bath opens her tale by declaring that 'lymytours and othere hooly

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[68] TCC, MS O.1.65. f. 266r.
[69] E.g., see BodL, MS Laud Lat. 106, ff. 209v–29r (f. 213rb) for a discussion of *atthomi* in a commentary on Gilles of Corbeil's *Carmen de urinis.*
[70] E.g., HEHL, MS HM 505, f. 123r.
[71] For this knowledge of Greek, Arabic and Latin uroscopy texts, I am indebted to M. Teresa Tavormina (private email exchange, 9th December 2017).
[72] E.g., Peter Murray Jones, *Medieval Medical Miniatures* (London: British Library, 1984), p. 56 and Elizabeth Lane Furdell, *Fatal Thirst: Diabetes in Britain until Insulin* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 27.
[73] BL, MS Royal 17 D.i, f. 14ra. My attention was drawn to this ambiguity by M. Teresa Tavormina (private email exchange, 9th December 2017).
[74] Bartlett Jere Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases: From English Writings Mainly Before 1500* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 413 (no. M709).

freres' are now 'as thikke as motes in the sonne-beem'.[75] The same image is used in Margery Kempe's fifteenth-century *Book* to describe one of her visions: 'Sche sey [...] many white thyngys flying al abowte hir on every syde, as thykke in a maner as motys in the sunne'.[76] Finally, the version of the Trojan myth now known as *The Laud Troy Book* claims that Hector fells the Greeks 'thikker, than the motes | In somer-tide fflyen In the sonne'.[77] This wide-ranging use of the phrase may have affected a reader's response to both the practical and the aesthetic aspects of the similes: firstly, it may have meant that the things to which unfamiliar bodily phenomena are compared in these similes were not only familiar from everyday life but also from commonplace language. As Christopher Cannon argues, the ubiquity of proverbs in medieval literary writings suggests that a widespread aesthetic attitude was built upon the premise that medieval readers derived pleasure from recognising what they already knew.[78] Repetition of commonplace or formulaic imagery does not, then, necessarily diminish the aesthetic aspect of medical texts, but may actually have constituted it for some medieval readers.

The fact that this common image recurs in literary and devotional writings also provides a crucial reminder that medical writing was part of the same textual culture as other genres: not only did those genres often occupy the same manuscript space, they sometimes shared a common mode of creative expression. The problem with seeing the language of recipes as entirely cut off from more consistently literary language is, then, easily apparent. Recognising this connection not only allows us to resituate medical

[75] Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, in *Riverside*, lines 866–68.
[76] Windeatt, ed., *Book of Margery Kempe*, lines 2874–76.
[77] *Laud Troy Book*, ed. by Ernst Wülfing, EETS os 121 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1902), lines 6848–49.
[78] Christopher Cannon, 'Proverbs and the Wisdom of Literature: *The Proverbs of Alfred* and Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee*', *Textual Practice,* 24 (2010), 407–34 (p. 408).

texts within broader discursive networks but also allows us to re-read canonical poetic texts with a richer and more nuanced, understanding of their meanings. Consider the following extract from Julian of Norwich's fourteenth-century devotional text, *A Revelation of Love.* This work, which *consistently* displays elaborate syntactic patterning and figurative language, is likely to have been considered far more poetic by medieval readers than medical recipes. However, in a passage describing Christ's crucified body, Julian uses an image which also appears in the fifteenth-century English translation of Gilbert the Englishman's *Compendium:*

> The plentuoushede [of Christ's blood] is like to the droppes of water that falle of the evesing of an house after a grete shower of raine, that falle so thicke that no man may nomber them with no bodely wit[79]

In the *Compendium* this image is used to portray the strained passing of urine by a patient suffering from strangury: the patient passes water as the 'eues of an house dropiþ'.[80] Both Julian and the translator of the *Compendium* are drawing upon the apparently commonplace Middle English simile, 'To run like gutters'.[81] Their use of the same image helps us construct a more nuanced idea about how each text may have been received by medieval readers. For example, the other similes that Julian uses in this chapter of *A Revelation* often attract attention on account of their striking homeliness: Christ's body is represented through things as mundane as herring scales, rain gutters and pellets of food or medicine. Knowing that the comparison to raindrops

[79] *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania University Press, 2006), ch.7, lines 17–19.
[80] Getz, ed., *Healing and Society*, p. 254. This image seems to have been stimulated by a phrase in Gilbert's Latin: see Gilbertus Anglicus, *Compendium medicine* (Lyon, 1510), f. 274r: 'Unde sicut guttatim in vesicam cadit'.
[81] Whiting, *Proverbs,* p. 255 (no. G495).

falling from a gutter was a commonplace that could be used by a medical writer to describe the passing of a patient's urine only makes this homeliness more pronounced: the wide-ranging applicability and familiarity of Julian's simile become clearer.

It seems likely that Julian intended these images to shock readers through their inappropriate homeliness: they almost render Christ's miraculous human body imaginable in everyday terms. And yet, immediately after tantalising the reader with this possibility, Julian withdraws it, proclaiming that the raindrops or blood droplets fall so plentifully 'that no man may nomber them with no bodely wit'. The simile is taken away as an aid to visualisation; Christ transcends the imagination. In response to this incomprehensible abundance of Christ's blood, a reader experiences confusion, fear, and awe. However, as commentators have pointed out, this is an appropriate response to a divine being who suffered *unfathomable* amounts of pain for mankind: such emotions bring one, through an apophatic state, closer to knowledge of God.[82] In that respect, Julian's simile can also be seen to serve a healing function. The health of the soul and the body were intimately connected in medieval medical thinking: sin could actually bring about physical sickness.[83] Addressing one's spiritual health was, then, a first step towards bodily health.

Could the similes in medical texts have functioned in an analogous way, bringing about health through the effects and affects they produced on the senses and the mind? Possibly. Similes invite the reader to transfer the physical, emotional and cognitive responses he or she has to one thing over to another thing. In the Middle

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[82] Vincent Gillespie, and Maggie Ross, 'The Apophatic Image: The Poetics of Effacement in Julian of Norwich', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium V,* ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1992), pp. 53–77 (p. 65).

[83] See Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, introduction to *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2015), pp. 9–17.

Ages, this transferral was reflected upon by Arabic philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Avicenna.[84] These thinkers, the same individuals who transmitted a lot of Greek medical thought to the West, devoted a significant amount of intellectual effort to affirming the relationship between logic and comparative devices such as metaphors or similes. It was claimed that the pleasure provoked by these devices triggered an act of compliance from the imagination, a mental faculty which mediated between the senses and higher intellectual powers. This compliance could be compared and contrasted to the conviction which logical syllogisms sought to extract from audiences' rational faculties: both responses were types of compliance that occurred in the mind.[85] However, while the goal of logical syllogisms was to produce conviction in the truth of the propositions, the goal of these poetic premises was to produce wonder and pleasure and to trigger acts of imagination.[86] Furthermore, although this act of compliance in the imagination licenced comparison with the workings of the higher rational powers, both Avicenna and Al-Farabi claimed that metaphors and similes invited responses from audiences that were not mediated by the rational faculties but were more instinctive.[87] As Deborah Black explains, these devices encourage audiences to 'transfer to [one thing] the

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[84]Salim Kemal, *The Philosophical Poetics of Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroës: The Aristotelian Reception* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2003), pp. 82–127.

[85] *Avicenna's Commentary on the Poetics: A Critical Study with an Annotated Translation of the Text,* ed. and trans. by Ismail M. Dahiyat (Leiden: Brill, 1974), ch. 1.4, p. 63: 'Both imaginative assent and conviction are [kinds of] compliance. Imaginative assent, however, is a compliance due to the wonder and pleasure that are caused by the utterance itself, while conviction is a compliance due to the realization that the thing is what it is said to be.' See also Vincent Gillespie, 'Never Look a Gift Horse in the Mouth: Affective Poetics in the Middle Ages', *Litteraria Pragensia*, 10 (1995), 59–82.

[86] Deborah Black, 'The Imaginative Syllogism in Arabic Philosophy: A Medieval Contribution to the Philosophical Study of Metaphor', *Medieval Studies,* 51 (1989), 242–67 (p. 245).

[87] Dahiyat, ed. and trans., *Avicenna's Commentary,* ch 1.2, pp. 61–62: 'The imaginative is the speech to which the soul yields, accepting and rejecting matters without pondering, reason or choice. In brief, it responds psychologically rather than ratiocinatively, whether the utterance is demonstrative or not. The demonstrative is different from the imaginative, for an utterance may serve to prove the truth (of something) without exciting emotion. Yet if said again, in a different way, it may often affect emotion without conviction occurring as well, and [in this case] the soul responds in keeping with imaginative assent rather than with conviction'. See also Black, 'The Imaginative Syllogism', p. 246.

emotive attitude generally associated with [another]'.[88] The famous example which Avicenna gives to illustrate this transferal is 'honey is vomited bile': regardless of whether one likes honey or not, and regardless of whether one wishes to be affected by the image, one cannot help feeling disgusted when honey is described in this way.[89]

The theories of these Arabic thinkers were transmitted to the Latin West through translations by Gerard of Cremona, John of Seville, and Hermann the German.[90] Consequently, similar ideas about physical and emotional transference appear in the later writings: like Avicenna, Thomas Aquinas gives the example that a man can be persuaded to hate a food which is described to him in distasteful terms.[91] Modern scholars have also observed these transferrals and tried to incorporate them into broader psychological and social theories.[92]

How might these transferrals contribute to recipes' healing purpose? Emotions, also known in medical discourse as passions or accidents of the soul, were one of the non-naturals: aspects and activities of everyday life that, if not managed properly, could cause ill health. An excess of a particular emotion could, this theory suggested, make an

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[88] Black, 'Imaginative Syllogism', pp. 256–57. The estimative faculty – which resides near the imagination – is responsible for these emotive attitudes: see Harvey, *Inward Wits,* p. 45.

[89] Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Qiyās*, ed. by S. Zayed (Cairo: al-Matbaʿa al-Amīrīya, 1964), ch. 5.7, cited in Black, 'The Imaginative Syllogism', p. 257.

[90] *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100–c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition*, ed. by A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, rev. edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 277–84. Hermann the German translated Averroes' commentary on the *Poetics*, which was heavily influenced by Avicenna's writings.

[91] Minnis and Scott, eds, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 283.

[92] For a summary and critique of the modern 'interaction theory' of metaphor, see Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 148–51. The starting point for much of this research was George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By,* rev. edn (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), which demonstrated that metaphors embedded into cultures shape the way the inhabitants conceptualise things. See also George Lakoff, 'Mapping the Brain's Metaphor Circuitry: Metaphorical Thought in Everyday Reason', *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience,* 8 (2014), 1–14; Simon Lacey, Randall Stilla and K. Sathian, 'Metaphorically Feeling: Comprehending Textual Metaphors Activates Somatosensory Cortex', in *Brain and Language,* 120 (2012), 416–21.

individual physically ill.[93] One can imagine that a reader consulting a remedy book might be disgusted by the recipes' depiction of wounded and leaking bodies or alarmed at the prospect of his or her own ill-health. By encouraging the reader to transfer the more pleasant feelings he or she has towards the non-bodily phenomenon onto the ailing body, medical texts may well have calmed some of those feelings of disgust and fear and assisted, or been felt to assist, in the patient's easing, if not their recovery. Consider the following example from John Trevisa's fourteenth-century translation of Bartholomew of England's description of *scabbe*, a particularly unpleasant type of scurfy skin affliction. This comparison, which is taken directly from Bartholomew's Latin text, is a particularly apt example because it uses honey, one of the terms of Avicenna's metaphor:

> Þe heed is igreued specialliche wiþoute in þe skyn wiþ pymples and whelkes and scabbis, out of þe whiche comeþ quittir iliche hony. And þerfore Constantinus clepiþ suche scabbe *fauum* 'honycomb', for suche whelkes haue smale holes out of þe whiche quittir comeþ as hony out of þe honycombe.[94]
>
> [*quitter* = pus]

Bartholomew's simile reverses Avicenna's metaphor: whereas Avicenna's comparison turns honey, a pleasant substance, into something unpleasant, Bartholomew's construction turns the distasteful substance pus into the sweet and pleasant honey. The scabbed head becomes far more bearable to comprehend when it is represented in these figurative terms.

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[93] On the non-naturals, see Peregrine Horden, 'A Non-Natural Environment: Medicine Without Doctors and the Medieval European Hospital', in Bowers, ed., *The Medieval Hospital,* pp. 133–45.
[94] Seymour and others, eds, *On the Properties of Things,* I, Bk 7, p. 344, lines 19–23. For the Latin, see Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *Tractatus de proprietatibus rerum* (Nuremberg, 1483), Bk 7, Section II.

A substantial amount of critical attention has been paid in recent years to the importation of medical language into other kinds of discourse in order to represent diverse experiences metaphorically.[95] However, aside from Marie-Christine Pouchelle's exploration of the broader cultural and psychological significance of the metaphors used in Henri de Mondeville's surgical writing, far less attention has been paid to the reverse process: the representation of medical phenomena by more pleasant non-medical phenomena, such as spider's webs, shields and raindrops.[96] To be sure, Pouchelle sometimes seems to overinterpret and psychologise Mondeville's analogies too much, interpreting, for instance, Mondeville's comparison between a cook and the stomach as evidence of his attitude to the rising middle classes.[97] Nonetheless, paying attention to the extra-medical associations of the analogies in medical texts is important.

Honey is a particularly interesting case because it seems to have been transported from medical to non-medical discourse, and then back again. It was one of the most common ingredients in medieval remedies and was traditionally associated with healthy nourishment: as Trevisa's translation of *De proprietatibus rerum* claims, 'The honycombe hatte *fauus* and haþ þat name of *fouendo*, "norischinge and socourynge" [...] for þe honycombe conforteþ and socoureþ þe hony þerwiþinne'.[98] Because of this association with sweetness, nourishment, and health, honey was often used figuratively in both secular and spiritual writings to portray the object of earthly and sacred desires: in 'The Miller's Tale', Absolon asks Alison, his paramour: 'What do

[95] See Ch. 4, fn 1. Virginia Langum recently drew attention to a more reciprocal kind of exchange between surgical and confessional discourse in 'Metaphor as Medicine in Medieval Surgical Manuals' (paper presented at the Metaphor Festival, Stockholm University, August 29–31, 2013), accessed online at <https://www.academia.edu/19502646/Metaphor_as_Medicine_in_Medieval_Surigcal_Manuals?auto=download>[accessed 1/07/2016]>

[96] Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery,* pp. 91–205.

[97] Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery,* p. 102.

[98] Seymour and others, eds, *On the Properties of Things,* II, Bk 19, p. 1320, lines 10–16.

ye, hony-comb, sweete Alisoun?' (I. 3698). In his devotional writings, the English visionary Richard Rolle proclaims, 'Swete Ihesu, þy bodi is like to a hony combe, for hit is in euche a way ful of cellis, and euch celle ful of hony'.[99] Bartholomew's comparison between pus-filled scabs and honeycomb may be more visually appropriate and less emotively charged than Rolle's comparison, but it is hard to imagine that the image of honey could be segregated from these widespread and densely layered positive cultural associations with pleasure, sexual satisfaction and devotional fulfilment. The image therefore illustrates the messy and reciprocal associative networks in which medical language partook.

Not all similes in medical writings make the unpleasant pleasant. In a few examples, providing an appropriate comparison for the bodily phenomenon seems more important than making that phenomenon amenable: in Trevisa's translation of Bartholomew's encyclopaedia, for example, the excrement produced by a patient with dyssentary 'semiþ as it were waisschinge of fleisch' ('a flushing out of flesh').[100] Although the aptness of this simile may have produced pleasure in a reader, it leads him or her straight back to the bodily.[101] Other similes in recipes, such as the culinary comparisons likening medicinal substances to porridge and beef, gesture, almost in an intertextual *mise-en-abyme*, to other genres of practical writing, grounding themselves within that corpus. This evokes the way that similes are used in herbals, where the plants are normally likened to one another. The entry for smallage in a copy of *Agnus Castus* reads:

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[99] Richard Rolle, *Meditation B,* in *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse,* ed. by S.J. Ogilvie-Thomson, EETS os 293 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 74, lines 227–29.
[100] Seymour and others eds, *On the Properties of Things,* I, Bk, 7, p. 403, lines 7–8.
[101] Aristotle's acknowledgement of the pleasure produced in humans by representations was conveyed to the Latin West by Hermann the German's translation of Averroes' commentary on the *Poetics:* see Minnis and Scott, eds, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 293.

> this herbe hath leuys like to lofache . butt the leuys ben nott so longe as the leuys of loueache and he is nott ^so^ strong of sauoure as loueache and he berith seede as itt were parsell seed[102]
>
> [*lofache* = lovage; parsell = parsely]

In these texts, the similes are more consistently stylised and self-referential, leading the reader back to the topic of the text.

The majority of the comparisons in remedy collections, though, do liken bodily phenomena to more pleasant things and, like the simile form itself, these things often straddle the boundary between the aesthetic and the utilitarian. For example, in the comparisons examined earlier, the hairnet, shield and broached doublet are all functional clothing items and accessories but they are also aesthetic adornments to one's appearance. Similarly, when Gilbert the Englishman compares the faeces of a man with dysentery to the shavings of parchment, he refers to a material that could be used to record all kinds of useful information but was also the surface upon which painters and poets displayed their skills.[103] Even those images which seem more explicitly functional appear multivalent upon closer inspection. For example, whilst the gutter in Gilbert's description of a man urinating is a functional device, the raindrops falling intermittently from it are beautiful and mesmerising. The same is true of the spider's web. It is functional in an obvious way: it helps the spider to catch its food. It is also proclaimed in modern and medieval medical writings to have useful healing properties.[104] At the same time, though, it is a clear piece of artistry, woven carefully by

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[102] HEHL, MS HM 58, f. 1v.
[103] For the Latin version of the parchment simile, see Gilbertus Anglicus, *Compendium medicine*, f. 219r.
[104] E.g., *John of Mirfield*, *Surgery: A Translation of the Breviarium Bartolomei Part IX*, trans. and ed. by James B. Colton (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1969), pp. 113–14. Demaitre, *Medieval Medicine,* p. 57, notes a fever cure involving a spider's web by the ninth-century Persian physician Rhazes, whose

the spider. Furthermore, it can symbolise delicacy, weakness, and practical *uselessness*: in the Book of Job, it is proclaimed that those who forget God trust in something as weak as a spider's web (8: 14, King James Version).

Sometimes, it is not merely objects that bring these categories together but words too. In a remedy for earwigs in the ear, the reader is instructed to make a cake of flour and milk 'in þe maner of þe bos of a bokelar'; later, the cake is simply referred to metaphorically as 'þe bos'.[105] *Bos* can refer to the raised circular centre of a shield (or 'bokelar'). In Trevisa's translation of Bartholomew of England's *De proprietatibus rerum*, the human navel is also compared to a *bos* and there the image is both visually and etymologically appropriate: the navel 'hatte *vmbelicus* in latyn, as it were þe middil boos of tweyne, as þe middil place of a bokelar. So seiþ Isidre'.[106] Bartholomew's etymology, derived from Isidore of Seville, makes sense because the Latin word for the *bos* of a shield is *umbo.* The word *bos*, though, does not just mean the raised centre of a shield. It can also refer to an embossed adornment upon an object, a round trinket such as a medallion, a fashionable hairstyle or, in medical discourse, a bulge or swelling.[107] It therefore brings together different areas of life – aesthetic, practical, and medical – in exactly the way that similes in medical texts do. These similes are part of the recipes' richly allusive, hybrid language and they invite a similarly hybrid response from readers which combines cognitive, emotive, and sensual experiences.

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writings were influential upon medieval Europe. On the healing benefits of the spider's web recognised by modern medicine, see Mount, *Dragon's Blood,* pp. 114–15.

[105] BL, MS Additional 33996, f. 125r.

[106] Seymour and others, eds, *On the Properties of Things,* I, Bk 5, p. 260, lines 2–4. For Bartholomew's Latin, see Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *Tractatus de proprietatibus rerum*, Bk 5, Section 47.

[107] *MED, boce,* n., entries 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 3(a) and 3(b).

Puns

Puns are the final feature to be examined for the various ways in which they bring aesthetic experience and practical concerns into conversation. Unlike the syntactic structures and similes examined above, however, puns bring a whimsical, subtly comic thread to the recipes, which can impede rather than fulfil the remedies' practical purpose. They occur in verse and prose remedies, but, for no obvious reason, are more frequent in prose texts.[108] Often, they appear in doublets like that in the recipe quoted at the beginning of this chapter: 'welle tham wele' ('boil them well'). In that particular remedy book, which is Robert Thornton's copy of the *Liber de diversis medicinis*, variations of this sonic and visual echo appear at least sixteen times.[109] 'Wele' is also attached to many other verbs in the collection such as 'stampe' and 'boyle'. The latter is a synonym for 'wele'.[110] This range of verbs and synonyms might suggest that Thornton, or whoever was responsible for the exemplar he copied, recognised the appropriateness of an unadorned, straightforward style for copying recipes, but could not resist – and did not deem entirely inappropriate – the occasional indulgence in more playful language.

Homophonic doublets also appear in recipes as ingredients: two of the most common are the 'hertis herte'[111] or the 'hares here'.[112] Sometimes, there is no obvious connection between the ailment and the ingredient: for instance, the hart's heart is used to treat epilepsy, an ailment which was not thought to be caused by the heart but by a

[108] For example, the pun ''And sethe [...] in welle water wel' occurs in a verse remedy book: see Stephens, ed., *Extracts in Prose and Verse,* p. 351, line 53.
[109] See Ogden, ed., "*Liber diversis medicinis"*, pp. 1, 7, 9, 12, 13, 32, 34, 35, 46, 54, 74, 77, 78.
[110] Ogden, ed., "*Liber diversis medicinis"*, p. 34, line 31; p. 44, lines 20–21.
[111] BodL, MS Laud misc. 553, f. 46r. See also BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 239.
[112] TCC, MS O.1.65, f. 248v. This pun also occurs in BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 23; BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part II, p. 14; BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part II, p. 102; BodL, MS Laud misc. 553, f. 72r and BodL, MS Rawlinson C. 506, f. 95v.

build-up of humours obstructing particular passages of the brain.[113] At other times, though, the homophonic ingredient bears a clear homeopathic correlation to the body part or ailment it is treating: the hart's heart was also recommended for strengthening the human heart, because the animal's long life and enduring heart were legendary.[114] As the cure for kidney stones demonstrated earlier, this kind of homeopathic natural magic based on resemblances, analogies and metonymical relations was common in medieval medical writings and considered more acceptable than other types of magic, such as necromancy.[115]

In these examples, though, a specific kind of *verbal* homeopathy is at play. Eugene McCarthy claims that 'the possession by one object of a name identical with or closely resembling that of another, even though there be little or no resemblance in function or appearance, enables it to exert some magic influence'.[116] Sometimes this sonic similarity occurs between the two nouns comprising an ingredient, as in the hare's hair, and seems to guarantee that that ingredient will have a marvellous healing influence. At other times, it is the similar sounding names of ingredient and afflicted body part which guarantees potency. For example, eggs (often spelt *ei, eye* or *aye*) are frequently used to treat eye disorders.[117] This verbal homeopathy reflects larger

[113] This occurs in BodL, MS Laud misc. 553, f. 46r. (Pages are missing before this leaf but it is clear that the recipes are for epilepsy as the page begins '[...] and he schal falle namore'). On epilepsy, see Juhani Norri, 'Entrances and Exits in English Medical Vocabulary, 1400–1550', in Taavitsainen and Pahta, eds, *Medical and Scientific Writing in Late Medieval English,* pp. 100–43 (p. 127).
[114] Getz, ed., *Healing and Society*, p. xix. See also BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 239 where it is used in a remedy for 'þe cardyakyl' (heart pain and palpitations).
[115] On the acceptability of natural magic, see John Henry, 'The Fragmentation of Renaissance Occultism and the Decline of Magic', in John Henry, *Religion, Magic and the Origins of Science in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 1–48 (pp. 8–11). Henry notes, though, the possible blurring between this type of magic and more troublesome types of demonic magic.
[116] Eugene S. McCartney, 'Verbal Homeopathy and the Etymological Story', *The American Journal of Philology,* 48 (1927), 326–43 (p. 326).
[117] E.g., BodL, MS Ashmole 1477, f. 36r; TCC, MS O.1.13, f. 71v; BodL, MS Laud misc. 553, f. 42r.

attitudes in medieval culture to the relationship between words and things. The two were often considered intimately connected.[118] Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*, for instance, works upon the premise that the names for things were derived from some distinctive properties of those things and could, therefore, subsequently illuminate their essence.[119] In the same way, puns were considered 'a rhetorical means of revealing underlying correspondences' which 'were not random [...] but [...] linguistic indications of the intricate unity of the divine plan.'[120] Like cures like. The hare, heart and egg puns may, then, have convinced readers of the potency of the cures in which they appeared.

The relationship between puns, practicality and efficacy is not, however, quite this straightforward. Analogy – as a system that structured relations between earthly things and relations between earthly and divine phenomena – was increasingly challenged by late medieval philosophers as an accurate means of understanding the world.[121] Moreover, there had long been a tradition of medieval thought, influenced by classical ideas, which argued that the relationship between words and things was arbitrary.[122] For example, in *De doctrina christiana,* St. Augustine distinguished between two types of sign: natural and conventional. Natural signs are those which – aside from

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[118] See also the views of the *modistae*, grammarians who argued that language aligned ontologically with concepts and things, in order to produce an objective representation of reality: Sheila Delaney, *Medieval Literary Politics*, pp. 153–54; Sarah L.Uckleman and Henrik Lagerland, 'Logic in the Latin Thirteenth Century', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Logic*, ed. by Catarina Dutilh Novaes and Stephen Read (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 119–41 (pp. 136–38).

[119] On medieval attitudes to etymology, see Bloch, *Etymologies,* pp. 35–40, 54–63.

[120] Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 85.

[121] On analogical thought, see Delaney, *Medieval Literary Politics,* pp. 19– 41; Stephen Penn, 'Literary Nominalism and Medieval Sign Theory', in *Nominalism and Literary Discourse: New Perspectives,* ed. by Christoph Bode, Hugo Keiper, and Richard J. Utz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 157–89 (pp. 182–87); Henry, 'The Fragmentation of Renaissance Occultism', pp. 9–10.

[122] Bloch, *Etymologies*, pp. 44–54. Nominalist thinkers such as William of Ockham are often placed in this category and portrayed as pre-empting the modern structuralist split between signifier, signified, and referent. Stephen Penn, 'Literary Nominalism', p. 163, however, has shown how this representation is misleading: though Ockham questioned the ontological status of universals, he 'was not casting doubt on the capacity of words to signify 'reality'. Rather he was attempting to change the nature of that reality by confining it to the particular'.

any intention by the sign-user to impose meaning upon the sign – lead to knowledge of another thing: for instance, smoke is a natural sign of fire. Conventional signs, on the other hand, are not intrinsically related to the things they represent; examples of these are human words or gestures, which have been developed arbitrarily to communicate specific thoughts or emotions.[123] Puns can draw attention to the arbitrary relationship between signs and things because they demonstrate that one sign can develop multiple meanings: consequently, it becomes apparent to the listener or reader of the pun that the meanings of ambiguous words can only be determined by context and acts of interpretation.[124]

All of this means that puns appear poised between revealing fundamental cosmic connections and revealing the random, messy nature of human language. Consequently, they are also poised between the serious and the playful. Because they establish connections between things, they can be used to teach and impress lessons; they may have had this function in sermons and devotional writings.[125] But they can also be used in a comic, carnivalesque way: the unexpected interruption of one discourse by another compels the reader to reassess the tone of a work drastically. The presence of crude, sexual puns in seemingly serious discourse is a prime example.[126]

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[123] Green, trans., St. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, pp. 56–59.

[124] For a brief discussion of Augustine's theory in relation to language use and puns in *The Pardoner's Tale*, see Laila Abdalla, '"My body to warente...": Linguistic Corporeality in Chaucer's Pardoner', in *Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 65–84 (p. 66).

[125] E.g., Julian of Norwich's use of puns is noted in Vincent Gillespie, '[S]he Do the Police in Different Voices': Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody in Julian of Norwich', in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008), pp. 192–207 (p. 193).

[126] On the debate surrounding Chaucer's use of 'queynte' as a pun, see Larry D. Benson, 'The "Queynte" Punnings of Chaucer's Critics', in *Contradictions: From Beowulf to Chaucer: Selected Studies of Larry D. Benson*, ed. by Theodore M. Anderson and Stephen A. Barney (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), pp. 217–42.

The dual nature of puns in recipes is best illustrated by the following remedy, which contains the pun involving eyes and eggs:

> For to mak an oygnement for þe eyen Tak an eye and roste it ryght harde or boyle it and kytte it in the myddylle and tak owte the ȝelke and þere as þe ȝelke was putt poudre of coporose whyle it is hotte but loke it be white coperose and panne it all to gedre in a lynnen clothe and presse it strongely bytwen thyn hondys so þat the jus of þe eye and coperose come owte togedre and with þat jus anoynte thyn eyne[127]
>
> [coperose = metallic sulphate]

The puns on 'eyen'/'eye' and 'eye'/'eyne' are chiastically arranged at the beginning and end of the recipe. This word play could convince a reader of the cure's occult, homeopathic power. Even if it was understood as whimsical word-play made possible by the arbitrariness of language it could still serve a rhetorical and practical purpose: pleasant sound play pleases and amuses us in advertisements today, for instance, potentially making us more likely to buy the product on sale. But puns can also distract, disorientate and confuse: the pun in the above remedy momentarily invites a reader to imagine roasting, boiling and cutting an eyeball. It therefore has the opposite effect to the similes, which, by comparing bodily ailments to natural and domestic phenomena, make the former *less* grotesque. Another remedy punning on *eye* is similarly disorientating:

> For red eyen tak an ey bolle and ful hit ful of red wyn and put þerto a peny wiȝt of salt and let hit stonde so vj daies in þe bolle after anoynte þyn eyen[128]

[127] BodL, MS Ashmole 1477, f. 36r.
[128] BodL, MS Laud misc. 553, f. 42r.

'Bolle' (egg shell) does not help to clarify things because it could also be used to refer to the eyeball or the white of the eye.[129] In fact it only makes the play even more noticeable and the sense of confusion greater.

It seems likely that the author and scribe of these remedies would be aware of this potential confusion; the various spoken and written forms of *egg* troubled medieval writers.[130] As part of an exasperated lament over pronunciation and spelling change in the preface to his version of Virgil's *Aeneid*, William Caxton recounts the following anecdote about three merchants stranded in Kent:

> And one of theym named sheffelde a mercer cam in to an hows and axed for mete. and specyally he axyd after eggys And the good wyf answerde. that she coude speke no frenshe. And the marchaun*t* was angry. for he also coude speke no frenshe. but wold haue hadde egges / and she vnderstode hym not / And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he wolde haue eyren / then the good wyf sayd that she vnderstod hym wel / Loo what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte. egges or eyren / certaynly it is harde to playse euery man / by cause of dyuersite & chau*n*ge of langage.[131]

Caxton considers the multiple forms of words to be a hindrance to successful communication. A scribe of another remedy containing the pun on *eye* seems to have been of a similar view. In this late fifteenth or early sixteenth-century eye remedy, the scribe has written 'eyren' before crossing it out and replacing it with 'egg':

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[129] *MED, eie,* n.1, entry 1(g).

[130] See also *Knyghthode and Bataile,* an anonymous fifteenth-century poem on conduct in war. One of the three manuscripts contains five glosses for the word 'egge', denoting the front line of a body of soldiers; the glosses suggest that the annotator thought the word could pose interpretive problems. See *Knyghthode and Bataile,* ed. by Z. M. Arend and Roman Dyboski, EETS os 201 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. xv. My attention was drawn to these glosses by Daniel Wakelin 'Instructing Readers in Late Medieval Poetic Manuscripts', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 73 (2010), 433–52 (pp. 442–43).

[131] *The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton*, ed. by W. J. B. Crotch, EETS os 176 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 108.

> For þe syte of the Eyen
> Tak wylde tansye and stampe it well and mengle þe iuse with þe whyte of an <Eyren> ^Egg^ and laye it to the Eyes evine and mornyngs and wasshe þe Eyes with hotte whyte wyne and do so ofte for it proved[132]

The correction suggests that the scribe considered the near pun inappropriate. Perhaps this was because it might distract a reader from following the recipe's instructions or perhaps it was because the wordplay seemed incongruous with the remedy's sparse, imperative tone. This correction, however, makes the scribes' decision to keep the wordplay in the other manuscripts even more striking.

Although these puns are examples of easy, relatively unsophisticated wordplay, their presence demonstrates that creativity and humour could be deployed in remedies, even when there was a high chance that the creative play would actually impede the recipes' communicative purpose, rather than co-exist with or fulfil that purpose, as many of the other creative structures examined in this and the previous chapter seem to do. Sometimes, play took precedence over practicality. The recipes, though, are not merely linguistically and formally creative: they can also be conceptually creative. The final part of this thesis will demonstrate this by examining the imaginative, flexible and varied ways in which the recipes approach ideas of time, wonder, and absurdity.

[132] BodL, MS Radcliffe Trust e. 10, f. 8v. Normally in my transcriptions I have decapitalised any letters which are randomly capitalised; here, however, I have left the capital 'E' in place as it is only used to capitalise the words for *eye* and *egg.* Perhaps it was used in the scribe's exemplar to draw attention to the sonic similarity or healing connection between these two words or things.

Temporal Wonders

'All this processe concludith vp[on] time'[1]

John Lydgate, 'The Dietary'

This line only appears in two of the extant manuscript copies of Lydgate's 'Dietary'.[2] It is part of an eight-stanza sequence which, though written in Lydgate's characteristic style, does not always seem to have been considered part of the poem. However, the line sums up much of the poem's advice: in whichever version it is read, 'The Dietary' impresses upon the reader the importance of waking, eating, drinking, and sleeping at the optimum time and for the optimum amount of time: 'vse nevir late for to suppe' (32), 'bit agid men betymes go to rest' (56), 'fire at morwe & toward bed at eve' (129), and 'suffre no surfetis in thyn hous at nyht' (137). In all such regimens, it is imagined that the advice will be put into practice by the reader throughout the course of his or her life: the recommendations are not just one-off, quick-fix cures, but rituals to be internalised and repeated through time.

Other genres of medical writing also offer distinctive ways of structuring and representing time. For instance, uroscopies, which contain diagnostic and prognostic information, bring past, present and future into conversation with one another. In his uroscopy, Henry Daniel, quoting from Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, claims that 'hit behovith him that shall be a leche for to knowyn thingis þat arn passid and wittin þingis

[1] Lydgate, 'The Dietary', in *MPJL*, p. 704, line 89. Future references are within the text.
[2] On the relationship between these stanzas and the rest of the poem, see Walsh Morrissey, '"To al Indifferent", p. 260.

þat nowe arn and for to sen beforn thingis þat arn for to comyn'.[3] The diagnostic and prognostic art of uroscopy seeks to establish the present and future health of patients from the past and present state of their urine. This advice bestows medical practice with an ethical dimension: prudence, which was classified by medieval thinkers as a cardinal virtue, was the ability to determine the most appropriate source of practical action through the consideration of past events, present circumstances, and future consequences.[4]

Remedy books, as patchwork texts, incorporate the temporal structures of all of these genres. But they also contain their own distinctive ways of structuring time. Two of these are particularly noticeable and they can be contrasted against each other: remedies often promise that the cure will bring about the patient's recovery rapidly, but the process of preparing the cure can be incredibly convoluted and time-consuming. Each of these stages can also be measured in a multitude of ways: in hours or days, in the number of minutes it takes to speak the psalm *Miserere mei, Deus,* or the time it takes to walk a certain number of miles.[5] Time can be marked by seasonal and astrological events, by prayer times and, in the later Middle Ages, one even finds occasional references in recipes to clocks, a relatively new late medieval urban

[3] HEHL, MS HM 505, f. 79v. See Lindsay, ed., *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi,* Bk IV, p. 177, lines 1–2.
[4] Marc Guidry, 'Advice Without Consent in *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Canterbury Tales',* in *Medieval Rhetoric: A Casebook,* ed. by Scott D. Troyan (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 127–45 (p. 137). See also Corey Owen, 'The Prudence of Pearl', *Chaucer Review,* 45 (2011), 411–34; Monica E. McAlpine, 'Criseyde's Prudence', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer,* 25 (2003), 199–224; Victoria Ann Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 29–36.
[5] Examples of recipes using this psalm to measure time occur in TCC, MS O.2.13, ff. 102v, 129r; it is not clear why this psalm specifically was chosen. Examples of time measured by walking distances occur in BodL, MS Douce 78, ff. 8r, 11r, 13v, 14r, 14v, 16r, 17v.

phenomenon: a remedy from the second half of the century instructs the reader to gather herbs 'bytwyn viij and ix of þe clocke'.[6]

Much critical attention has been paid to how mechanical clocks altered the way time was measured in the later Middle Ages. One of the earliest studies was Jacques Le Goff's discussion of 'church time' and 'merchant time': Le Goff contended that the introduction of clocks allowed merchants to measure, buy, and sell their time accurately. This contrasted and sometimes conflicted with the Church's view that man's time belonged to God and could not be sold for profit. Le Goff acknowledged, though, that individuals were not bound to just one conception of time: for merchants, church time could function as a 'second horizon', framing their religious life.[7] Subsequent discussions of medieval time by Linne Mooney, Chris Humphrey, Paul Brand, and Caroline Barron have developed this emphasis upon multiplicity, arguing that individuals made use simultaneously of a variety of different ways of measuring time, not all of which were compatible.[8] Adopting a more literary focus, Paul Strohm has similarly shown how Chaucerian narratives apparently dominated by one mode of measuring and representing time actually contain within them a variety of competing modes.[9]

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[6] BodL, MS Laud misc. 553, f. 66v. For time measured by prayer times, see TCC, R.14.39, f. 40r. For an instruction to prepare herbs two weeks before and two weeks after midsummer, see BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 101.

[7] Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 29–42 (p. 37).

[8] Linne R. Mooney, 'The Cock and the Clock: Telling Time in Chaucer's Day', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer,* 15 (1993), 91–109; Chris Humphrey, 'Time and Urban Culture in Late Medieval England', in *Time in the Medieval World,* ed. by Chris Humphrey and W.M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2001), pp. 105–17; Paul Brand, 'Lawyers' Time in England in the Later Middle Ages', in Humphrey and Ormrod, eds, *Time in the Medieval World,* pp. 73–104; Caroline Barron, 'Telling the Time in Chaucer's London', in '*A verray parfit praktisour': Essays Presented to Carole Rawcliffe*, ed. by Linda Clark and Elizabeth Danbury (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2017), pp. 141–51.

[9] Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 110–43.

This notion of multiplicity is central to understanding how time works in recipe collections. This is not only because recipes contain the two contrasting temporal structures of prolonged preparation and rapid recovery but also because each of these structures can invite a variety of responses: both have the capacity to produce wonder but, when viewed from other perspectives availiable in medieval culture, they can also seem mundane or ridiculous. My contention in this chapter, then, is that recipe collections demand that readers move flexibly between different temporal perspectives or hold two in their mind simultaneously, often envisaging their bodies both in realistic *and* marvellous time. A similar kind of flexibility is frequently encouraged by more explicitly imaginative and artful texts, such as romances and devotional writings. Some of the authors of these writings borrow the language and temporal structures of recipes and exploit the ambiguities and tensions present in those structures in order to encourage imaginative flexibility amongst their readers. These careful and precise borrowings suggest that literary writers were more attuned to recipes' imaginative potential and artful manipulations of time than has hitherto been recognised.

Laborious Preparations

Certain medical preparations were renowned for their complex composition. For instance, *theriac,* a late medieval panacea, was famous for the large number of ingredients it contained: the most esteemed variety from Montpellier allegedly contained eighty-three different substances.[10] Although many of the cures in remedy books only contain a handful of ingredients and a few simple instructions, there are

[10] Paul Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 68.

often several remedies within each larger collection that seem far more convoluted. Some of these recipes require even more ingredients than the *theriac* from Montpellier. This recipe for a medicinal concoction called 'water of antioche' is from a large late fifteenth-century collection. Rubrication is marked in bold:

> **For to make the water of antioche that is the most principalle water and the best that mai be founde For that shal hele al maner sores T**ake **.** woderoue **.** bugle **.** pygle **.** sanycle **.** tormentille **.** scabiouse **.** ambrosye **.** betayne **.** mousere . mousepese . palma Christi of euerich **v . vncer .** irenharde wodebynde . redebrere . feldethorne herbe iohn herbe water . herbe robert wodesoure coluerfote tanasye of euerich **iij vnce** consolida maior . consolida minor brounewort osemound of euerich . **v . vnces** fumetorie egremonie warmode . southernewode of euerich . **ij vnce** tauke auance mader **as moch wight as of all the other herbis before** hayryfe ȝarewe . ribbewort weibrode ysope watercresse . sauge . lauendre off euerich **an handfull** dytaundre **v . vnce c**rowesope brome . verueyne . hemp rede dokke . rede netele . the rote of redes that groweth in water orpyne . rede cowele of euerich **ij . vnces and halfe** violett daundelion vrtica greca colombyne . herbe yue . solsequye . todewort persile . rewe of euerich **an vnce and a quarter** flos campi **. iij vnces** . croyser . morell . hillewort . puliol ryall . flexe hokkes . clytheren houndestong . baume . peritorie . radiche . horehounde of euerich **an vnce and half** astrologia rotunda . watercarse . weyhore eufragie toutsayen . merche moderwort moggewort wild tesyle bornet of euerich **an vncer and iij quarter . G**racia dei . centorie radix gladioli pympernole . saxefragie . filipendula . calamynte of euerich **. iij handful** . **o**rigoun **. s**treberi wyse **.** prymerose cowslippe . houndestonge . spygernole . endeyue . yuy of the oke . rede rose maidenhere . holihokke of euerych **v . vnces c**ryspe malowe . vartelon rosemaryne maiorana . **c**araway . cerefoyl peruynk . leke sedewale affodylle of everich **ij . vnces and a quarter . g**roundeswelie **ij vnces** smerewort lombestonge valeryane . lauriole leues . mercurie . borage . costemarye . wilde tansie . quyntefoyle of euerich **ij vnce and a quarte** filles dragaunce . softe . bursa pastoris rede mynte . haymayde of everich **. ij . vnces.**[11]

[11] HEHL, MS HM 58, f. 85r–v.

The recipe requires one hundred and twenty-five different herbs. Other recipes in the collection contain similarly large numbers of ingredients: for example, a remedy for gout requires thirty-eight different herbs and a recipe for a salve requires sixty-one.[12] In the above recipe, the scribe has carefully rubricated the amount required of each herb. Rubrication is not used in the shorter recipes surrounding this longer text; this suggests that the scribe was concerned that the large number of ingredients might confuse a reader, causing him or her to mistake the amount required of one herb for that of another. Extra precautions for clarity were needed.

Another recipe for 'water of antioche' is also included in the collection, but it is much shorter, only requiring fourteen different herbs, honey and white wine.[13] Perhaps this alternative recipe – far less time-consuming and expensive to prepare – was considered a more practical alternative to that above. Like the recipes examined in Chapter One, which were distinguished by their use of the finest ingredients, the lengthy recipe may only have been included because it suggested wealth: the owner of the recipe book *could* purchase all of these ingredients *if* he or she chose to do so. In other lengthy recipes, though, it is not the number of ingredients which makes them appear time-consuming, but the number of stages involved in their preparation and the way those stages are described. The remedy below is for a fistula:

> A medecyn for the comyne festre / tak hardys / and hak theym and wet hem wel in lyes of ale / that ys ymad of whete and soth hem wel and bynd hyt so vppon the sore a hol nyȝt / and a hol day /and thanne tak hyt away and wasch the sor wyth mannys pysse / and lok thou haue poudre alredy ymad in thys manere Tak the grete fetheres of the gos and do away the rowe and thanne bren hem and mak a poudre therof and do hyt in a molour and lay that poudre on the sore and vppon that lay lard of the bor or of a barw

[12] HEHL, MS HM 58, ff. 51v–52v, 66r–v respectively.
[13] HEHL, MS HM 58, f. 90r.

> and sauge / and vppon al that a wortlef and after tak goud stal ale that ys mad of whete clene wythoute barly or any other corn and fyl therof a pot that be hol and newe and put therto salt / and pych and arnement of eche elyche moche / and of wex more thane of any othyr and seth al thys ryȝt wel tylle at hyt be thykke and set yt thanne adoun and lat hyt kele and sattelyn and thanne make a plastere ther of and lay to þe festre / Fyrst laye the forsayd poudre and thanne the plastere and thanne the lard / and thanne þe lofd and chaunge at morwe / and at euen /and ȝyf hym drynke eche morwe anence for that day þat he drynketh hyt he shal not greue[14]
>
> [*hardys* = the coarse part of flax; *lyeȝ* = sediment; *molour* = handheld stone for grinding substances; *barw* = castrated boar; *sauge* = sage; *wortlef* = cabbage leaf; *arnement* = iron or copper sulphate; *lofd* = error for leaf; *anence* = anise]

There are extended paratactic, polysyndetic structures ('and [...] and [...] and') and temporal conjunctions ('Fyrst [...] thanne [....] thanne') which make explicit to the reader the number of stages involved in the remedy's preparation; twenty-six different imperatives communicate the labour's varied and protracted nature. Furthermore, extended sequences of pre- or post-modifiers such as 'goud stal ale that ys mad of whete clene wythoute barly' and 'a pot that be hol and newe' suggest that locating ingredients or apparatus that are 'just right' could take the reader a significant amount of time. Ingredients also have to be left for a particular number of days if they are to prove efficacious: the mixture of flax and ale sediment must be left for 'a hol nyȝt / and a hol day'. In other recipes, ingredients have to be left for longer periods: for example, a fifteenth-century remedy for wounds instructs the reader to hang up a herbal mixture 'a fourtnyght befor myssomer and a fourtnyght after' and a fifteenth-century remedy for gout requires the reader to bury a pot of henbane leaves deep in the ground before

[14] BodL, MS Laud misc. 685, ff. 83v–84r.

taking it up 'and þat day a xij monthe þat þou didest hit in þe erþe'.[15] These recipes both have a ritualistic air about them: the symmetry of two weeks before and two weeks after midsummer and the pleasing circularity of retrieving something from the earth a year after its burial suggest that these time spans may have been selected, in part, for their aesthetic appeal. In the above remedy for a fistula, the aesthetic dimension to this ritualistic experience is communicated – and heightened – by the fact that the period of time for which the ingredients must be left is communicated through a nicely balanced but circumlocutory structure: 'a hol nyȝt / and a hol day'. It would have been simpler to write 'a nyȝt and day'.[16] The circumlocution in this phrase and the emphatic tone of 'hol' underscore that waiting for the ingredients to combine is – like the rest of the recipe – a process that will extend through, and take up, time.

The remedy not only records a time-consuming and laborious process; it is also time-consuming to read. As well as stringing together imperative after imperative, it moves back and forth in time in a way that is hard to follow. The recipe begins by telling the reader to make and apply a concoction to the patient's sore; it then instructs him or her to make a particular powder but it simultaneously shifts back in time because it tells the reader that he or she should already have made it: 'lok thou haue poudre alredy ymad in thys manere*'*. Afterwards, the reader is instructed to lay the powder to the sore, followed by the fat of a boar, sage and a cabbage leaf. Next, instructions are given to make a plaster. Immediately after, however, another moment of temporal confusion occurs: the reader is again instructed to apply 'the forsayd poudre', the fat, and the cabbage leaf, only this time the application of the plaster is inserted between that of the

[15] Respectively, BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 101 and BodL, MS Laud misc. 553, f. 63r.
[16] On other kinds of doublets in recipe writing, see Wakelin, *Scribal Correction*, p. 206. See also my discussion in Ch. 4, pp. 159–60.

powder and the boar's fat. It is unclear whether this is a repetition of the earlier application sequence or a correction to it. Such temporal ambiguity gives the remedy a cyclical and confusing feel, encouraging a reader to re-read it in an attempt to clarify its instructions. The remedy therefore not only depicts a time-consuming process, it also creates one. The laboriousness of both these processes contrasts with the rapidity with which the medicine is claimed to work once it is inside the body: 'that day þat he drynketh hyt he shal not greue'. The incredibly long preparation and rapid working of the remedy seem carefully juxtaposed: each works to make the temporal characteristics of the other more noticeable.

In this account of preparing a cure, then, there is no urgency; the lexical choices and syntactic structures instead seem designed to emphasise the protracted labour involved. Very rarely do remedies of any kind urge the reader to be hasty in their preparations.[17] One might contrast this lack of haste against the urgency in other types of writing concerned with the sick. For example, a widely copied devotional text, which scripts a speech of Christian reassurance to be delivered to the sick and dying alongside the last rites, survives in a fifteenth-century manuscript where several other late medieval hands have copied remedy collections.[18] This combination of religious and medical texts is not surprising: religion was thought to be an effective remedy for the soul *and* the body, because bodily afflictions were sometimes considered the result of

[17] Exceptions include recipes on TCC, MS R.14.39, f. 19r and TCC, MS 0.1.13, ff. 65r, 151r, which promise alleviation if the medicine is administered 'betymys ('promptly') and a recipe on BodL, MS Ashmole 1477, f. 34r, which instructs the reader to strain a mixture 'as faste as thow may wythoute taryynge'.
[18] BodL, MS Ashmole 750, ff. 11v–14r. Substantial recipe collections occur between ff. 142r–47v; 169v–79r; 184r–94r. On this *ars moriendi* text, see Amy Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380–1540* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), pp. 18–54.

spiritual sickness.[19] Accordingly, the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which tried to implement a range of changes to confessional practice, decreed that, before offering medical treatment to a patient, it was a physician's responsibility to ensure that the patient had already confessed his or her sins.[20] Like others of its kind, this *Ars moriendi* text is far more concerned with haste than the surrounding instructions for preparing medical cures: at various intervals, the script is punctuated by commands such as 'Of thu maist noȝt for haste of deth seie al this befor: begyn here'.[21] The reader is encouraged to skip forward through the text if the patient's sickness is too severe.

One might explain these different levels of urgency by arguing that for medieval writers and readers the stakes of saving the soul were far higher than those of saving the body. But this is not a convincing solution because, though urgency is often absent from the remedies' description of preparing cures, it is not absent from the remedies altogether: as we shall see, many recipes contain reassurances that, once the patient has used or ingested the remedy, he or she will be cured within a few days. This reassurance shows that the authors and copiers of the remedies *were* concerned with lessening bodily pain in this life. Perhaps, then, the lack of urgency in the cures is better understood, in part at least, as a pragmatic acknowledgement of the fact that some processes cannot be sped up: due to the seasons and astrological movements of the planets, herbs need to be collected at particular times and prepared in particular ways;

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[19] Yoshikawa, introduction to *Medicine, Religion and Gender,* pp. 9–17. On the history of the concept of *Christus medicus*, see R. Arbesmann, 'The Concept of "Christus Medicus" in St. Augustine", *Traditio*, 10 (1954), 1–20.

[20] Carole Rawcliffe, 'Curing Bodies and Healing Souls: Pilgrimage and the Sick in Medieval East Anglia', in *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan,* ed. by Colin Morris and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 108–40 (p. 119).

[21] BodL, MS Ashmole 750, f. 13r. For similar exhortations to haste, see 'Lerne to Dye', in *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems,* ed. by Frederick James Furnivall and Israel Gollancz, EETS es 61 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), lines 365–66, 459, 772, 904–10.

substances need time to react with one another. Medieval readers clearly recognised and made provision for these delays: just as the remedy for a fistula assumes that the reader will have pre-prepared the required powder, others instruct the reader to place the remedy into boxes ready for future use: 'put hit yn a box of horne or of copre and whan þou wylt [...] put a lytyll yn þyn eyȝen'.[22] A minority of recipes also instruct the reader to purchase ingredients or pre-prepared mixtures from an apothecary. Those purchases may have been more common in practice than the infrequency of these explicit instructions imply.[23] All of these examples of foresight are ways for the practitioner to exercise prudence, to show his or her ability to use past and present experience of effective cures and commonplace ailments to calculate which remedies he or she might need at hand in the future.

The possibility that practitioners made some of these time-consuming cures in advance does not, however, change the fact that they invested significant time and effort in doing so. Even if the recipes were *never* put into practice, it is still interesting that scribes took the time to copy them alongside shorter, more convenient cures. Perhaps these longer recipes were included because arduous, protracted labour – and its written record – can impress or amaze: an individual's ability to labour at something over a long time and to test the boundaries of his or her patience, concentration, and physical capabilities could induce boredom in an onlooker, but it could also arouse admiration because it is a singular skill. As Caroline Walker Bynum has shown, medieval thinkers understood singularity or rarity as an important component of the marvellous.[24] Of course, recipes do not always describe actual people putting them into

[22] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part II, p. 3.
[23] E.g., TCC, MS O.1.65, ff. 253r, 254r.
[24] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), p. 48.

practice, but they do invite a reader to imagine him or herself, or another practitioner, translating instruction into action. The idea of doing something can be as wondrous as its reality. The above recipes – with their endless lists of herbs, pronounced temporal structures ('a hol day and a hol night') and climactic juxtaposition of slow process and rapid result ('that day þat he drynketh hyt he shal not greue') – are certainly written in a way that transforms extended labour, or its written representation, into a spectacle to be marvelled at.

Although they advocate different anthropological approaches to understanding cultural practices, Claude Levi-Strauss and Pierre Bourdieu have both shown that time is integral to such understanding, or misunderstanding. They demonstrate this through gift exchanges: if a gift is reciprocated too soon, it suggests that the recipient felt under an obligation to return the gift; if the same gift that is given is returned immediately, the gift may have been returned in rejection; if the return of the gift is decided upon at the moment it is given, then some kind of loan is in place.[25] Bourdieu argues that the strategic manipulation of time is at work even in those cultural rituals which seem fixed and formulaic in nature.[26] Indeed, although recipes are often formulaic, time and its strategic manipulation seem central to understanding unusually lengthy cures such as those above. At what point do protracted labour and its written representation become spectacles, which are not merely responses to unalterable seasonal factors but are also intended – by means of their protracted nature – to impress an onlooker or reader? Of course, those spectacles might in turn serve their own practical healing purpose, convincing patients of the practitioner's prowess or the cure's ritualistic, occult potency;

[25] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, translated by James Harle Bell and others (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 52–53; Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice,* pp. 5–9.
[26] Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice,* p. 7.

these things may have eased patients of their distress or, through a placebo effect, actually improved their condition.[27] Medical practitioners such as John of Arderne recommended telling patients comic, tragic and biblical narratives in order to distract, please, and uplift them, thereby making them more willing and able to receive unpleasant treatments.[28] These elongated recipes might be seen as analogous kinds of narrative: each consecutive stage is a new affirmation that the patient's affliction is being – or will be – methodically, meticulously, and diligently treated. But the protracted nature of the spectacle might also be interpreted negatively: at what point does the enacted or represented labour involved in the cure appear excessive and, therefore, absurd?

A literary text which echoes late medieval recipe discourse will help to illuminate this close relationship between time, wonder, and the ridiculous. John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (c. 1390) is itself very lengthy: totalling 33,000 lines, it is composed from a series of narratives, all of which are framed by the story of an aging lover confessing his sins to the priest of Venus. In Book V, the protagonist is told the story of Jason and Medea as a warning against the moral trials of love. Gower depicts Medea labouring extensively to produce a 'medicine' to restore Jason's ancient father, Eson, to his youth.[29] His lengthy and detailed portrayal of this episode is closely based

[27] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2003; first published 1966), p. 84, makes a similar point about the rain rituals of the Dinka: 'instrumental efficacy is not the only kind of efficacy to be derived from their symbolic action. The other kind is achieved in the action itself, in the assertions it makes and the experience which bears its imprinting'.
[28] E.g., *TFA,* pp. 7–8. On the broader relationship between sickness and narrative, see Turner, 'Illness Narratives', pp. 61–87.
[29] *The English Works of John Gower,* ed. by G.C. Macaulay, EETS es 81–82, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1900–1901), II (1901), V.4119, 4154. Future line references are within the text.

on Ovid's similarly lengthy representation in Book VII of *Metamorphoses.*[30] In the *Confessio*, Medea's labour is drawn out across 200 lines and divided into five stages: the gathering of ingredients (V. 3957–4022) is followed by a sacrifice to the Gods (V. 4023-58); next comes the performance of a ritual around Eson's body (V. 4059–4114) and the preparation of the medicine (V. 4115–4154), followed by the eventual administration of it (V. 4154–4174). The labour required for each stage is described in great detail. The episode is too long to reproduce in its entirety (V. 3957–4174) but quoted below are extracts from the first two stages of Medea's toil:

> Ferst sche began to clepe and calle
> Upward unto the sterres alle,
> To Wynd, to Air, to See, to lond
> [...]
> Doun fro the Sky ther cam a char,
> [...]
> And up sche styh, and faire and wel
> Sche drof forth bothe char and whel
> Above in thair among the Skyes.
> The lond of Crete and tho parties
> Sche soughte, and faste gan hire hye,
> And there upon the hulles hyhe,
> Of Othrin and Olimpe also,
> And ek of othre hulles mo,
> Sche fond and gadreth herbes suote,
> Sche pulleth up som be the rote,
> And manye with a knyf sche scherth,
> And alle into hir char sche berth.
> Thus whan sche hath the hulles sought,
> The flodes ther foryat sche nought,
> Eridian and Amphrisos,
> Peneie and ek Spercheïdos,
> To hem sche wente and ther sche nom
> Bothe of the water and the fom,
> The sond and ek the smale stones,
> Whiche as sche ches out for the nones,
> And of the rede See a part,

[30] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* ed. and trans. by Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols (London: Heineman, 1916), I, Bk VII, lines 179–293.

That was behovelich to hire art,
Sche tok, and after that aboute
Sche soughte sondri sedes oute
In feldes and in many greves,
And ek a part sche tok of leves:
Bot thing which mihte hire most availe
Sche fond in Crete and in Thessaile.
In daies and in nyhtes Nyne,
With gret travaile and with gret pyne,
Sche was pourveid of every piece,
And torneth homward into Grece.
[...]
Sche tok up turves of the lond
Withoute helpe of mannes hond,
Al heled with the grene gras,
Of which an Alter mad ther was
Unto Echates the goddesse
Of art magique and the maistresse,
And eft an other to Juvente,
As sche which dede hir hole entente.
Tho tok sche fieldwode and verveyne,
Of herbes ben noght betre tueine,
Of which anon withoute let
These alters ben aboute set:
Tuo sondri puttes faste by
Sche made, and with that hastely
A wether which was blak sche slouh,
And out therof the blod sche drouh
And dede into the pettes tuo;
Warm melk sche putte also therto
With hony meynd [...] (3977–4049)

The episode spans another 120 lines. The description of Medea's labour as nine days and nine nights long, the herb-collecting excursions, warm milk, and black ram are all taken directly from Ovid's *Metamorphoses.*[31] However, all of the above ingredients – even the more obscure-seeming ones – are also found in late medieval recipes and charms. The 'wether' which is 'blak', for example, occurs in many collections: a fifteenth-century remedy for aching joints calls for 'a pece of blake lambe skynne', adding that

[31] Justus Miller, ed. and trans., *Metamorphose*s, I, Bk VII, lines 234–35, 224–33, 247, 244.

this is preferable to a white skin but not explaining why.[32] In this recipe and the *Confessio*, the lack of explanation for such specificity renders the inaccessible knowledge of the expert practitioner more mysterious. It is not just the ingredients which have parallels in remedy collections: Medea's supernatural feat of restoring youth is also paralleled in remedies promising to make the patient 'ȝonglyche' ('youthful'): one remedy claims to have been used by a man who lived to a hundred and fifty years old.[33]

It is possible, then, that Gower recognised the parallels between Ovid's depiction and contemporary medical recipes, approaching the former – in part – through the lens of the latter. A strong indicator of this recognition is his description of Medea's concoction on two occasions as a 'medicine' (V. 4119, 4154); this replaces Ovid's term 'carmina' (charms), which has stronger associations with magic.[34] Another indicator is Gower's use of a culinary process to explain how Medea prepares the black ram: 'The blake wether tho sche tok, | And hiewh the fleissh, as doth a cok' (V. 4071–72). Although later in the poem, Ovid does describe Medea boiling a ram, he never uses culinary processes as analogies for Medea's medical preparations.[35] Similar analogies, however, occur frequently in remedy collections: 'for the goute take an owle and [...] opyn hym as þu woldyst ete hym'.[36] The description of Medea as a 'cok' also evokes culinary recipes, and thereby momentarily re-roots the depiction of Medea in the same domestic and household space within which many recipe collections, medical or culinary, were written and read. It seems likely, then, that Gower's readers would have

[32] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part II, p. 24. For recipes requiring similar ingredients see BodL, MS Ashmole 750, f. 185r; TCC, MS O.1.13, f. 46r and TCC, MS R. 14.39, f. 8r.
[33] BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 270.
[34] Justus Miller, ed. and trans., *Metamorphose*s, I, Bk VII, lines 167, 253.
[35] Justus Miller, ed. and trans., *Metamorphose*s, I, Bk VII, lines 312–17.
[36] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part II, p. 112.

recognised the parallels between this episode and the traditions of late medieval recipe writing.

Medea's cure for old age allegedly contains over one thousand ingredients (4139) and is executed 'with gret travaile and with gret pyne' (4020). The protracted nature of this labour is emphasised in the extract above through the same syntactic structures deployed in recipes: circumlocutory parallel structures containing superfluous prepositions, such as 'in feldes and in many greves' and 'in daies and in nyhtes Nyne', appear frequently, recalling the phrase 'a hol nyȝt / and a hol day' in the remedy for a fistula. Gower does use such constructions elsewhere in the poem (for example, V. 4283–4) but they are more common in this episode and are often clustered together for maximum effect.[37] Narrating Medea's drawn-out labours, Gower also joins clauses together into endless lists through polysyndetic, paratactic constructions ('and [...] and [...] and'). Previous chapters have noted how these accumulative structures connect practical writings to more overtly crafted ones. In this passage the endless repetition of 'and' combined with the couplet rhymes recalls the rhythm of verse medical charms: it enraptures and enchants in the same way. This connection to charms is fitting given Medea's own supernatural abilities. These supernatural powers are demonstrated in a passage towards the beginning of the narrative which also emphasises the protracted nature of Medea's toil:

> Hir char sche let awai to gon,
> And tok out ferst that was therinne;
> For tho sche thoghte to beginne
> Such thing as semeth impossible,
> And made hirselven invisible. (V. 4024–28)

[37] For such clusters, see V. 3979, 4009, 4010, 4015, 4018, 4019, 4020, 4120, 4125.

In the space of a single line (4028) Medea achieves the seemingly impossible and turns herself invisible. This instantaneousness contrasts with and undercuts the language of beginnings and first stages deployed in the previous lines. It also contrasts with the protracted account of Medea's labour that surrounds the passage. So, in this extract, which is original to the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower uses the same technique as the author of the fistula remedy who proclaims at the end of that lengthy text that the very same day the patient drinks the remedy, he shall be relieved of all pain. In both instances, the juxtaposition of a marvellously rapid process with a wondrously elongated one serves to highlight the marvelousness of each temporal dynamic. This example shows that literary writers and writers of recipes could manipulate time in equally artful ways.

Gower, then, encourages a reader to marvel at Medea's ability to toil for more than nine days and at his ability to transform this labour into over two hundred lines of poetry. But he simultaneously encourages a reader to view such prolonged labour as absurd. For example, in a passage added to Ovid's account, Gower writes:

> Sche made many a wonder soun,
> Somtime lich unto the cock,
> Somtime unto the Laverock,
> Somtime kacleth as a Hen
> Somtime spekth as don the men:
> And riht so as hir jargoun strangeth,
> In sondri wise hir forme changeth (4098–104)

The varied and protracted nature of Medea's labour is again represented through a repetitive rhetorical structure that focuses the reader's attention onto the passing of time: 'Somtime [...] Somtime [...] Somtime [...]'. But here that labour is bathetically reduced because Medea's 'wonder soun' – her own kind of specialist discourse – is reduced to the sub-linguistic noises of various types of bird. In the Middle Ages, bird

noise was often mockingly associated with nonsense speak: the word *jargoun* could apply both to the chatter of birds and the meaningless chatter of humans.[38] For instance, Chaucer uses it in *The Merchant's Tale* to describe the foolish jubilations of the aged lecher January after he consummates his marriage with May: he is declared 'ful of jargon as a flekked pye'.[39] Although the modern meaning of *jargon* as 'technical terminology' was not established until the late fifteenth century, earlier connections were made between misunderstood or misused specialist terminology and the meaningless noise of birds. For example, in Robert Henryson's fifteenth-century parody of medical recipes, 'Sum Practysis of Medecyne', the narrating voice greets the quack practitioner he addresses with the call of the cuckoo**:** 'Guk guk, gud day, schir'.[40] It is anticipated that nonsensical bird speak is all this sham practitioner, used to speaking nonsense, will understand. By drawing on these associations of bird noise with nonsense, Gower edges his representation towards mockery, teasing readers with the possibility that Medea's impressive and protracted performance might not have any healing purpose at all: it might turn out to be mere noise or empty spectacle, excessive, unprofitable and ridiculous.

Such suspicions reflect a late medieval concern with appropriate uses of time. Analysing the works of Ricardian poets, Gregory Sadlek recently claimed that, in the later Middle Ages, 'more and more emphasis was given to the value of productivity over and above the need just to keep busy'. He adds, 'writers not only expressed the urgent nature of time's passing [...] but also underscored the need to produce something of

[38] See *MED*, *jargoun,* n., and Orlemanski, 'Jargon and the Matter of Medicine', pp. 395–96.
[39] Chaucer, *The Merchant's Tale,* in *Riverside,* line 1848.
[40] Henryson, 'Sum Practysis of Medecyne', in *RH,* line 1.

value for the common good'.[41] Kellie Robertson has also emphasised the role of fourteenth-century labour laws in shaping definitions of industry and productivity: although the laws were mainly intended to regulate the labour of agrarian workers, Robertson claims the laws 'had a powerful effect on "immaterial" labourers: preachers, pilgrims and poets all found themselves forced to articulate not only the social benefits that accrued from their labours, but also to define their work in increasingly material ways'.[42] One example of such definition occurs in John of Arderne's fourteenth-century surgical treatise, *Fistula in ano,* when Arderne claims that the cure for anal fistulae was revealed to him by God as a reward for his protracted search for it. A fifteenth-century English translation, closely following Arderne's Latin original, renders this as follows:

> In hard thingis it spedith to studiers for to p*er*seuere and abide, and for to turne subtily thair wittes. ffor it is opned not to þam that ar passand but to tham þat ar p*er*seuerand. Therfore to the honour of god almyȝti that hath opned witte to me that I shuld fynde tresour hidde in the felde of studiers that long tyme and [with] pantyng breest I haue swette and trauailed ful bisily and p*er*tinacely in diuanudiis.[43]

Despite the manual nature of his surgical work, Arderne and his translator depict surgery as an *intellectual* pursuit ('felde of studiers' or 'agro studencium' in the Latin).[44] Here he follows many earlier surgical writers.[45] Ironically, though, he simultaneously frames his prolonged intellectual labour as highly physical work by describing it as a 'felde' to be traversed and by depicting himself panting and sweating during his labour.

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[41] Gregory M. Sadlek, 'Otium, Negotium, and the Fear of Acedia in the Writings of England's Late Medieval Ricardian Poets', in *Idleness, Indolence and Leisure in Literature*, ed. by Monika Fludernik and Miriam Nandi (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) pp. 17–39 (p. 24).
[42] Robertson, *The Labourer's Two Bodies*, p. 4.
[43] *TFA,* p. 3, lines 6–13. For a copy of the Latin text, see BodL, MS Ashmole 1434, f. 1v.
[44] BodL, MS Ashmole 1434, f. 1v.
[45] On the tradition of depicting surgery as a science see McVaugh, *Rational Surgery*.

This may have been done to make his academic toil seem more tangible, arduous and dramatic. Alternatively, as Marion Turner argues, Arderne may have foregrounded his body's weaknesses in order to communicate his own socially precarious position; he is dependent for his status upon the patients he treats.[46] Arderne's over-defined body, however, risks introducing an element of bathos into his self-presentation, reducing him to a grotesque corporeality.[47] The same is true of Medea. During her preparations, Medea is said to 'gaspe and gone' (V. 4064), which means to gasp for air and to gape or yawn.[48] She is also said to 'gaspeth with a drecchinge onde' upon the water three times (V. 3975). Both actions can be understood as part of Medea's ritual. But they are also signs of exhaustion. At these moments, Medea resembles Chaucer's sweating yeoman who risks becoming grotesquely comic by his extended pseudo-scientific alchemical toil: the Yeoman sweats 'as a stillatorie'.[49] Extended labour, these authors suggest, can demean as well as dignify.

This episode from the *Confessio* enables us to see, to return to Bourdieu's argument, how integral the timing and duration of an action is to our interpretation of it. In the medical context, drawn out labour – or its written representation in recipes – might impress or amaze, and the sheer length or complexity of that labour might convince a patient that specialist expertise lies behind the action or instruction. But such labour might also feel excessive, impractical, and ridiculous. It could also raise questions about the medic's motivations: medieval writers such as John of Mirfield criticised professional physicians for protracting their healing labours in the interests of financial

[46] Turner, 'Illness Narratives', pp. 76–77.
[47] Jeremy Citrome argues that Arderne's treatise displays his anxiety with fragmented, ailing bodies in Citrome, *The Surgeon in Medieval English Literature,* pp. 113–38.
[48] See *OED, gasp,* v., entry 1 and *MED, gaspen,* v.*;* see *MED, gonen,* v., entries 1(a), 1(b).
[49] Chaucer, *The Canon's Yeoman's Tale,* in *Riverside,* line 580.

gain.[50] One might hear echoes of such criticism in Chaucer's claim that his gold-loving physician 'kepte his pacient a ful greet deel | In houres by his magyk natureel'.[51] Long recipes, unapologetically leisurely in their requests for hundreds of herbs, might seem detached from such polemic. But, because they are often surrounded by much shorter cures, they stand out in collections and encourage a reader to think about *why* they have been included. Just like the instances examined in Chapter One of the extreme accumulation of recipes, these long texts – poised between the pragmatic, the marvellous, and the ridiculous – elude straightforward responses and interpretations.

Rapid Promises

The promises of rapid cure that one finds at the end of recipes – *after* the medicine has been ingested by the patient – also elude straightforward evaluation. Recipes often conclude with promises such as 'drynke þerof þre dayes [...] and he schal be sauf'[52] and 'he schal be hole within iij tymys drynkyng'.[53] Although one does sometimes find longer cure times of seven, nine and twelve (or more) days, there is a marked preference in the remedy collections for alleging that a cure will prove effective within three days or three repetitions of its application. Three may have been popular because of its prevalence in folklore, rhetoric, and scripture. Alternatively, this number might recur because three-day cycles were considered integral to the way particular types of fever came and

[50] Aldridge and Hartley, eds and trans, *Johannes de Mirfield,* pp. 48–49.
[51] Geoffrey Chaucer, *General Prologue*, in *Riverside*, lines 415–16. *The MED* translates the phrase to 'kepen in houres' as 'to keep (a patient) under favourable planetary influence' (*MED, houre,* n., entry 2(c)), but it could have had a double meaning for readers.
[52] BodL, MS Douce 84, f. 3r.
[53] BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, p. 20.

went.[54] John of Mirfield suggests that patients' expectation and anxiety also fuelled the ubiquity of such promises:

> [....] multi infirmi modernis temporibus valde impacientes sunt. Nolunt enim sicut antiquitus facere solebant expectare vsque ad quartum vel quintum diem vel amplius si necesse fuerit, quousque materia peccans fuerit digesta et vtiliter euacuata. Verum nisi statim in prima die sentiant alleuiamen de medico diffidunt euisque medicinas respuunt et contempnunt.
>
> [...] many patients in these modern days are particularly impatient, and are unwilling to wait until the fourth or fifth day or more for the morbid matter in the body to be digested and usefully evacuated, as was the custom in the olden days: for in truth, unless such people feel relief immediately on the first day, they distrust their physician and despise and reject his prescriptions.[55]

It seems that patients were willing to tolerate a long preparatory process but, after the medicine had been taken, they expected it to bring about relief rapidly. This might explain why some imprecise forecasts are reframed as precise ones: 'vse a quantite of this water [...] 12 . or. 14 . dayes'.[56] They instil more confidence in the reader. Despite their conventional and formulaic nature, such guarantees also encourage wonder, or at least evoke the idea of it. In a compendium of Middle English translations of John of Arderne's surgical writings*,* a patient with a swollen leg is cured within three days: 'And w*i*t*h*in þre daies w*i*t*h*out any oþ*er* medicyne he was p*er*fitely cured, whar-of many men wondred'.[57] This emphasising of the perceived marvelousness patterns for readers the response that the three-day cure could induce. In the remedy books, wonder is also encouraged by the juxtaposition of a rapid cure with a long period of suffering. For

[54] I am indebted to Daniel McCann for this suggestion.
[55] Aldridge and Hartley, eds and trans, *Johannes de Mirfield,* pp. 50–51.
[56] HEHL, MS HM 64, f. 170v.
[57] *TFA,* p. 52, lines 21–23. This edition is based on BL, MS Sloane 6, ff. 141r–74v.

instance, a remedy for hoarseness concludes with the claim: 'þis medicun was previd on a man in . 2 . days þat was 30 . wynter hors'.[58] Elsewhere, a reader is assured that 'þou ne schalt neuer haue [epilepsy] after þey þou haddist had hit xxx^ti^ winter afore'.[59] Wonder is produced when the impossible suddenly becomes possible. Moreover, because the untheoretical remedies do not explain *how* their ingredients bring about such surprising results, the element of mystery integral to wonder is maintained. Such claims recall, and were perhaps intended to evoke, the healing miracles attributed to saints. For instance, when Cardinal Peter of Luxembourg was nominated for canonization in 1390, he was said to have healed a widow's arm which had been swollen for three months and to have cured a man of permanent blindness.[60] The only difference is that recipes often assert the wonders of the natural rather than the supernatural.[61]

These promises of rapid recovery might be considered marvellous, but they might also be interpreted as hyperbole. Rather than taking them at face value some readers probably read them sceptically, doubting whether such formulaic rhetoric would ever come true. Others may have converted the promises' conventional hyperbole back into more realistic terms, believing that the recipes might offer them a cure but inferring that it would not be *as* quick as promised. Reducing the promises to these three categories – marvellous, hyperbolic and false – is, however, to overlook some subtleties in the way that they represent healing time. For instance, it is significant that the recipes very rarely guarantee to cure the patient in less than a day. The majority of the small

[58] BodL, MS Rawlinson C. 506, f. 93r.
[59] BodL, MS Laud misc. 553, f. 46v.
[60] Robert Bartlett, *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 10–11.
[61] Charms appealing to divine power are an obvious exception to this: e.g., TCC, MS O.1.13, f. 53r.

number of examples I have found of a cure being forecast in hours are for analgesics: for instance, a remedy for aches from the second half of the fifteenth century guarantees to 'mitigate the payne withinne an eure or ij'[62] and another recipe from the first half of the fifteenth century promises to stop a wound aching 'withyn half an oure'.[63] The long remedy for a fistula examined earlier only declares that the patient shall not 'greue' ('suffer') the same day that he uses the treatment; it does not promise to cure the fistula. These examples suggest that remedy writers could be more careful, accurate and discriminating in the way that they deployed time than the prevalence of formulaic, three-day guarantees implies. They also suggest that copiers or compilers of remedy collections moved flexibly between credible and incredible timescales and expected their readers to do so too.

An example of a medical writer who clearly expected such flexibility is John of Arderne. As we have already seen, Arderne did claim to have performed wondrously rapid cures. However, he also offers some very different cure narratives. In the same compendium of Middle English translations of Arderne's surgical writings that the three-day cure appears, his treatment of a swollen arm is described at great length:

> Þe arme of a certane manne biganne sodenly for to ake & prik in the buȝt of þe arme and aft*er*ward gretly to bolne fro þe shulder to þe fyngers [...] At þe last he soȝt & asked my help [...] ffirst I made hym ane emplastre of tartare of ale [...] I put þe emplastre on his arme, and alsone he feled alegeance of akyng. Þe 3 day, forsoþ, remeuyng þe emplastre, þe bolnyng in p*ar*ty was slaked. Bot in þe buȝt of þe arme al þe colleccion of gedryng abode stille, schewyng as it schuld gadre to ane heued. Þe which y-sene, I putte to ane emplastre maturatyue of malueȝ y-soþen and y-brissed, w*ith* grese 3 daies or 4, and neþ*er*les I p*er*ceyued neu*er* þe son*er* for to be matured, bot þe bolnyng abode mych stil.[64]

[62] BodL, MS Ashmole 1432, p. 20.
[63] TCC, MS R.14.32, f. 132r.
[64] *TFA,* p. 49, lines 15–34. For a copy of the Latin version of this passage, see BL, MS Sloane 347, f. 64r.

The account, which closely follows its Latin source, continues in this way for approximately four hundred words before the arm is cured. Within this episode, Arderne and his translator do evoke the motif of the three-day cure but they simultaneously undercut it: after the plaster is removed on the third day, the swelling ('bolnyng') is only 'in p*ar*ty [...] slaked'. Many more treatments must be applied before the arm is healed. This account of a protracted cure (rather than a protracted preparation of one) does not necessarily represent 'real time', if such a thing can even be captured in language: Arderne's surgical writings are often flagrant acts of self-publicity and this passage is designed to show his perseverance, ingenuity, and skill in the face of prolonged difficulty. But, given that much medieval medicine did probably progress by extended trial-and-error, it is likely to be closer to reality than the conventional three-day guarantees. So, like the recipes – with their rapid three-day cures and more pragmatic hour-long forecasts, and their long preparations suspended between the pragmatic and the spectacular – Arderne's writings demonstrate that medical writers expected and encouraged their readers to move flexibly between multiple temporalities, imagining their bodies both in realistic and marvellous time.

Recipe Time in Romances

The same flexibility is required by more consistently imaginative genres, such as romance. Romances often depict extraordinarily protracted battles or unrealistically rapid descents into lovesickness, thereby demanding that a reader suspend his or her normal sense of time. Shared manuscript space and imaginative exchanges between romances and medical writing have been explored by a few scholars, but the temporal

dimension to these exchanges has not been investigated.[65] The creative manipulation of time that occurs in romances is, however, sometimes achieved through careful borrowings *from* recipes. Recognising these re-inscriptions of recipe discourse can allow us to understand the temporal dynamics of romances better; it can also help us to achieve a more nuanced understanding of how the recipes' guarantees of rapid recovery might have been interpreted by contemporary readers.

My first example of this borrowing occurs in the Auchinleck copy of the anonymous romance *Bevis of Hampton* (c. 1300). In the surviving copies of this poem, the lines quoted below only appear in this manuscript, copied in the 1330s. In this passage, Josian (Bevis's wife) attempts to protect herself from a forced marriage to one of Bevis's Saracen enemies by making herself appear as a leper. She does so through the power of an unnamed herb:

> While ȝhe was in Ermonie,
> Boþe fysik and sirgirie
> She hadde lerned of meisters grete
> Of Boloyne þe gras and of Tulete,
> Þat ȝhe knew erbes mani & fale,
> To make boþe boute & bale.
> On ȝhe tok vp of þe grou*n*de,
> Þat was an erbe of meche mou*n*de,
> To make a man i*n* semlaunt þere,
> A foule mesel alse ȝif a were.
> Whan ȝhe hadde ete þat erbe, ano*n*
> To þe Sarasines ȝhe gan go*n*,
> [...]
> Þai nadde ride in here way
> Boute fif mile of þat contray,
> ȝhe was in semlaunt & i*n* ble
> A foule mesel on to se.[66]

[65] Corinne Saunders, 'Bodily Narratives: Illness, Medicine and Healing in Middle English Romance', in *Boundaries in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008), pp. 175–90; Orlemanski, 'Thornton's Remedies', pp. 246–50.

[66] Kolbing, ed., *Beues*, lines 3671–88. Future references are within the text. In other manuscripts either Saber or Josian apply the ointment and the episode is described without any mention of leprosy or time

The episode is structured like an inverted remedy, depicting the transformation into, rather than out of, leprosy. The power of the herb Josian uses is also expressed in the same infinitive and third-person format that many recipe titles take: 'For to make....'. Intriguingly, there is a close parallel for this episode in a large fifteenth-century remedy collection. Amongst these cures is a recipe for making a person *seem* like a leper:

> For to make won to seme A M3SELL
> Take C3R6SE and doo hit in his potages whiles hit is hoote and eete hit and he schall seme m3sel and if thou wilte delyver hit awaye take the iuce of fynell or fyngkill and leete hym dryngke hit 3 dayes and also anoynte his face therewithe and vyneger togeres[67]

Just as the herb Josian uses is identified only as an 'erbe of meche mou*n*de', the name of the crucial ingredient in this recipe – *ceruse*, white lead – is partially obscured through the use of a simple code. In both instances, the ingredient seems to have been obscured in order to create a sense of mystery. The century and a half separating these texts and a lack of other witnesses make it impossible to establish whether the author of the Auchinleck episode could have been influenced by an earlier Latin or English version of this or a similar recipe, or whether the recipe was influenced by a version of the romance.[68] We can be sure, though, that both texts – the instructional and the literary –

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passing: '[...] Iosyan haþ maad an oynement; | Here skyn, þat was boþe bryȝt & schene, | þere wiþ sche made ȝelew and grene.' (see Kolbing, ed., *Beues*, pp. 181–82 for variant versions). I have not cited the latest edition, *Sir Bevis of Hampton,* ed. by Jennifer Fellows, EETS os 349–50, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), because Fellows uses CUL, MS Ff.2.38 and Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS XIII.B.29, not Auchinleck.

[67] HEHL, MS HM 64, f. 102v. On leprosy, see Carole Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006). Given that many of leprosy's social and spiritual connotations are negative, it is not clear why someone would wish to appear as a leper.

[68] The Auchinleck *Bevis* was composed several decades before the explosion of vernacular medical writing in the late fourteenth century; this explosion, however, did not come from nowhere and English medical recipes were in existence (though in far smaller numbers) at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Alternatively, the author could have read Latin medical recipes.

have a similar interest in disguise and intrigue, showing that two texts of different genres could share an imaginative interest.

Other lines also suggest that the author of the Auchinleck episode chose to represent Josian's transformation through the language of recipes. In addition to the ingredients and infinitive constructions, he includes a precise temporal description of Josian's rapid transformation: 'Þai nadde ride in here way | Boute fif mile of þat contray...' The Anglo-Norman source text of the romance is far less specific in its medical and temporal allusions, simply claiming 'Un herbe achata, unkes meylur ne vist, | Tut en tent son cors e son vis',[69] translated by Judith Weiss as 'she bought a herb – you never saw a better – and with it she dyed all her body and her face'.[70] Recipes, however, often represent time through space: for instance, in a collection from the second half of the fifteenth century, a reader is instructed to 'styr [a concoction] wel þe space of a myle wey'[71] and, in another, ingredients are to be boiled 'þe space of a qwarter of a myle way'.[72] Very occasionally the time taken for a cure to work is also expressed in this way: in a remedy for worms in a man's ear, it is claimed that 'within a myle weye [the sap of the herb lovage] schal sle þe vermyn'.[73] It is possible, then, that the author of the Auchinleck episode adapted the text so that it reflected medical discourse – and recipes in particular – more closely.

This echo of recipes forges a connection between the marvellous, imaginary world of the romance and the concrete, practical world – and everyday means of

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[69] *Beuve de Hamptone: Chanson de Geste Anglo-Normande de la Fin du xIIe Siècle: Édition Bilingue,* ed. by Jean-Pierre Martin (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2014), lines 2779–80.
[70] Judith Weiss, *Boeve de Haumtoun and Gui de Warewic: Two Anglo-Norman Romances* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008), p. 77.
[71] BodL, MS Rawlinson C. 506, f. 155r.
[72] BodL, MS Douce 78, f. 8r.
[73] TCC, MS R.14.39, f. 2v.

measuring time – of the reader. The familiarity of these rapid recovery formulae does not, however, seem to have decreased their potential to arouse wonder in the eyes of the author: the negative construction prefacing the description of the miles walked, 'Þai nadde...', simultaneously assumes and instils readerly wonder. But there is one divergence from recipe formulae: whilst the recipes normally predict recoveries in days (sensibly reserving promises in hours for analgesics), Josian's inverted cure takes place in the time it takes to ride five miles. According to Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, walking five miles takes one hour and forty minutes, so riding would be even quicker.[74] It seems then that, though the recipes' temporal formulae could function within different text-types as a cultural shorthand for wonder, those formulae needed exaggerating if they were to impress in the already wondrous world of romance. Nonetheless, Josian's transformation never becomes instant; her body is still tied to earthly, mundane means of measuring time. So, in the Auchinleck *Bevis*, the recipes' guarantees simultaneously signify the wondrous and the familiar.

Similarly, in Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (c. 1469–70), imitation of the recipes' guarantees of rapid recovery draws attention to the multiple cognitive and emotional responses those promises might produce. In the dreamlike, almost atemporal atmosphere of this narrative, which is composed out of endless chivalric quests and battles joined together by paratactic structures such as 'and... and...' or 'and then... and then...', the time taken for the body to heal after it has been wounded is one of the few ways in which time is marked.[75] Amazingly quick cures occur very sparingly in the narrative; recovery times normally stretch to weeks or months. For example, 'Sir

[74] Chaucer, *A Treatise on the Astrolabe,* in *Riverside*, Part I, 16.15–16: '3 mile-wei maken an houre'.
[75] E.g., Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur,* ed. by P. J. C Field, 2 vols (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), I, 191, lines 5–16. Future references are within the text.

Trystrams was so wounded that unnethe he myght recover, and lay at a nunrye half a yere' (p. 143, lines 21–22) and 'Sir Gawayne lay syke and unsounde thre wykes in hys tentis with all maner of lechecrauffte that myght be had' (p. 912, lines 21–23). Given the license for magic afforded by the genre, a reader might expect cures in romances to be rapid or instantaneous. But, ironically, the forecasts in recipes seem more marvellous than the recoveries narrated in this romance.

In the light of these protracted recoveries, it is significant that one of the few wondrously quick cures that *does* occur in the narrative is phrased in language closely resembling that of a medical recipe. When Gawain and Sir Pryamas injure one another in combat in Book V, Sir Pryamas takes it upon himself to heal them both:

> "Now fecche me," seyde Sir Pryamus, "my vyall that hangys by the gurdyll of my haynxman, for hit is full of the floure of the foure good watyrs that passis from Paradyse, that mykyll fruyte in fallys that at one day fede shall us all. Putt that watir in oure fleysh where the syde is tamed, and we shall be hole within foure houres."
> Than they lette clense theire woundys with colde whyght wyne, and than they lete anoynte them with bawme over and over, and holer men than they were within an houres space was never lyvyng syn God the worlde made (p. 180, lines 14–22).

The imperatives 'fecche' and 'putt' recall recipes, as does the 'colde whyght wyne', a common ingredient in many cures. The clearest echo of recipes, however, is Pryamus's confident assertion 'we shall be hole within foure houres'. A few lines later this wondrously quick recovery time is further reduced to less than 'an houres space'. So, as in the Auchinleck episode, the day-long promises of real recipes are not merely replicated but are exaggerated to suit the already marvellous world of romance. It is significant though that – in spite of the supernatural assistance of 'the foure good

watyrs that passis from Paradyse' – the cure is again not instant. Malory certainly flirts with the idea of the instantaneous by teasingly reducing the recovery to less than one hour. However, this extreme reduction, and simultaneous reminder that the body cannot escape time, has a bathetic effect. Suddenly the promises appear as gentle parodies of recipe discourse, highlighting the inflated rhetoric of those guarantees by exaggerating them. It is, of course, only possible to parody a style of writing once that style has become conventional, commonplace, and recognisable. So, in both *Bevis* and *Le Morte d'Arthur*, the guarantees may not always have induced – or been intended to induce – awe: if they were drained of affective power by their formulaic and conventional nature, they may have functioned more as a shorthand for the *idea* of it. Jacques Le Goff's notion of the *aestheticization of the marvellous* is here relevant, capturing the means by which the concept of wonder – rather than the actual experience of it – might be used to vary and adorn the emotional surface of a work, while satisfying the generic expectations of a text-type such as romance.[76] In *Bevis*, this signification of wonder seems unproblematic. In *Le Morte d'Arthur*, however, it is complicated, as the forecasts – belonging half to the unearthly world of romance and devotional discourse and half to the world of the everyday – come to signify both the wondrous *and* the far-fetched.

Reading Practices

It is not my intention to deprive the recipes' guarantees of *all* emotive and affective power: although they might have functioned for some readers as a shorthand for the

[76] Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination,* trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 30.

idea of wonder or as hollow, unrealistic promises, they might have worked affectively upon others. I refer to 'affects' here, rather than 'emotions', in order to draw parallels with what Holly Crocker has defined as a more long-term 'structure of feeling' that 'arranged the contours of a person's identity' and 'color[ed] experiences'.[77] John of Mirfield's account certainly suggests that some patients continued to believe in rapid cures, becoming impatient if the remedy took more than a day to bring relief. A modern-day parallel might be the many miracle creams lining the shelves of pharmacies: like the remedies, these creams guarantee wrinkle-, blemish- or spot-free skin in a specific number of days or weeks. Though the results are never as promised – and we often anticipate that they will not be when we buy them – many of us still purchase the creams in the *hope* that this time they might work. For a medieval readership, hope may have been supplemented by faith: God might not have granted a rapid cure this time, but he might on the next attempt. When it comes to sickness, hope and faith can be powerful affective tools, encouraging individuals to supress their doubts. They can also make a patient feel physically and emotionally better. The recipes' promises of rapid recovery may, then, have invited a response similar to the wilful and continual re-suppression of rational objection which Steven Justice argues structured medieval belief in miracle stories and saints' lives – texts that are often just as conventional and seemingly far-fetched as the remedies' promises.[78]

The above evidence suggests that there was not one widespread response to the guarantees. Like the long recipes examined earlier, they could be interpreted in multiple ways and produce several different responses simultaneously. Medieval

[77] For definition and further bibliography, see Holly Crocker, 'Medieval Affects Now', *Exemplaria,* 29 (2017), 82–98 (pp. 84, 90).
[78] Steven Justice, 'Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?', *Representations,* 103 (2008), 1–29.

readers were used to imagining their bodies from different temporal perspectives at one time or in quick succession. Although we might associate such flexibility most readily with explicitly fantastical writings such as romance, it could be required by texts – and combinations of texts – of all varieties. Indeed, the compilatory form of many manuscripts demanded that readers constantly adjust their temporal outlook: in one such composite manuscript, a late fifteenth or early sixteenth-century hand has composed a list of the number of miles that separate different ports.[79] Earlier in this manuscript, however, a different fifteenth-century hand has composed a list of the distances between different planets and between the heavenly spheres: the distance between earth and the sphere that Christ resides in would take seven thousand seven hundred years to walk.[80] Like many recipes, both lists appear – in their form and structure – mundane and unimaginative. Nevertheless, they ask the reader to imagine him or herself in very different scenarios: one is realisable within the constraints of earthly time but the other requires a creative expansion of that familiar temporality.

The same flexibility is required by a late fifteenth-century manuscript containing medical recipes and devotional poems.[81] This manuscript demonstrates how medical timescales can interact with those of different genres. Twenty-eight medical recipes have been copied between two devotional poems.[82] The recipes often measure the duration of actions in hours: 'lay hit in warme watur þe space of . 1 . oure'; 'ete non mete no drynke aftur þe space of an houre or more'; 'sethe ham in faire watur þe space of an houre or more'.[83] The collection gives more precise timings than most remedy

[79] CUL, MS E.e.15, f. 129r.
[80] CUL, MS E.e.15, f. 73r.
[81] BodL, MS Douce 78.
[82] The recipes occur in BodL, MS Douce 78, ff. 7v–17v.
[83] BodL, MS Douce 78, ff. 8r, 15r. Other examples occur on ff. 13v, 12r.

books.[84] It also contains a few examples of a recovery being guaranteed within a small number of days.[85] More frequent, however, is the instruction that the patient should use the medicine for as long as he or she needs to: for example, 'drynke þer of warme euery day furste and laste XV days togedur and more if hit be nede'.[86] These instructions depict the reader engaged in a process of self-healing, which can extend through time in a leisurely fashion.

In the manuscript that survives today, the recipes are incomplete; pages appear to be missing between the recipes and the devotional poem that follows. It is possible, then, that there used to be a text in-between. The recipes and the poem were, however, copied by the same hand and in the same rubrication style; it is clear that they were intended to be part of the same codex. So, regardless of whether or not they appeared consecutively, the compiler or reader would have been able to draw connections and contrasts between the two. The most obvious contrast between the texts concerns time. Below are the first four stanzas of the poem; they encapsulate that work's temporal perspective:

> O þou pereles prynce of peese
> with all myne herte y þe pray.'
> be þou not to vs vnmercyfulleys
> þe whiche þou haste ymade for ay.
>
> Oure kynde is fragyll withoute nay
> and evyre hathe be setthe þou madyste vs.'
> say we þerfore every day
> miserere mei deus.
>
> We þat byn nowe boþe fayre and fressche

[84] The collection also often gives precise durations using spatial measurements such as miles and furlongs: e.g., BodL, MS Douce 78, ff. 8r, 11r, 13v, 14r, 14v, 16r, 17v.
[85] The only examples occur on BodL, MS Douce 78, ff. 8v, 12r, 16v, 17v.
[86] BodL, MS Douce 78, f. 14v. Similar commands can be found on ff. 8v, 9v, 10v, 11r–11v, 12v, 13v, 14r, 15v, 16v, 17r.

schulle fade and falle as dothe a flowre.'
and all þe delycyousnes of oure flessche
schall passe in lasse space þen won houre.

Pryncys kyngys and emperoure
þey schall knowe whatte now is.'
and be ryȝte fayn to say every howre
miserere mei deus.[87]

The hypothetical, sickening body of the remedies is here made general and ubiquitous, as man's fragile and ailing earthly state is emphasised ('Oure kynde is fragyll withoute nay | and euyre hathe be setthe þou madyste vs'). However, while the remedies show man engaged in a protracted process of repairing this sick body, the poem predicts a rapid process of decay for humankind, which inverts the hour-long recovery depicted in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*: 'all þe delycyousnes of oure flessche | schalle passe in lasse space þen won houre'. As life is telescoped into an hour, we are shown to have very little time to heal and repair our bodies or souls. It is the appearance of the same phrasing in the poem and the recipes ('þe space of an houre') that encourages a reader to contrast the two temporal perspectives. The poem could be interpreted as a corrective rebuke to the recipes that reminds readers of the vanity of tending to their body's earthly needs: 'Hyt helpythe full lytyll aȝenste dethe to rage | for sone sche wyll overcome all vs'.[88] However, the decision of the scribe or the compiler to copy the poem *and* the recipes suggests that both texts – and both visions of time – offered him or her something valuable: recognition of the body's corruptibility on earth did not stop individuals, plagued by pain and discomfort, spending time tending to it. Faith and healing action each offered their own comforting temporal vision.

[87] BodL, MS Douce 78, f. 18r.
[88] BodL, MS Douce 78, f. 18v.

The proximity of these texts again demonstrates readers' ability to hold two different temporal perspectives in their minds at once without those perspectives necessarily being in tension. It seems that such flexibility was a more common part of reading experiences than we might assume, operating within compilations of all kinds, including remedy collections. Not only do the recipes require just as much flexible thinking as romances and devotional writings but they are also used within those unearthly texts as a creative means of manipulating time. Imaginative writings in themselves, they also functioned as imaginative tools. To reduce the recipes to practical, instructional writings is, then, to overlook the creative reading they invite and the creative thinking they stimulated in other medieval writers concerned with the protraction, contraction, and evasion of time.

Experiencing Boundaries

It is not only the temporal structures in recipes that pose imaginative and interpretive challenges: medieval medicine confuses the categories of human and object, the marvellous and the banal, and the permitted and the prohibited in a variety of ways, many of which could have discomforted contemporary readers. In remedy collections, miraculously quick healings of human flesh are promised through the application or ingestion of mundane domestic objects; commonplace herbs are claimed in *experimenta* to affect the body in ways that cannot be explained by humoral theory; charms and amulets using orthodox scriptural language are condemned by some pastoral writers as demonic.[1] Because of this blurring of categories, it can be very difficult to establish where the different boundaries were drawn by medieval thinkers between the natural and the supernatural, the licit and the illicit.

A few canonical texts offered guidelines which were recopied throughout the Middle Ages. St. Augustine condemned charms, divination, and astrology, as well as all healing uses of herbs, stones and animal parts that exploited those substances' occult powers rather than their known, natural ones; he argued that such practices brought individuals into dangerous contracts with demons.[2] Also influential was Gratian's *Decretum*, a twelfth-century legal textbook which drew heavily upon Augustine's writings and included divination, charms, amulets, and unorthodox uses of religious

[1] On attitudes to charms and amulets, see Don Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), pp. 21–73; Catherine Rider, *Magic and Religion in Medieval England* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), pp. 55–61; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400–c.1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 266–98.

[2] Green, trans., St. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, pp. 91–101.

rituals amongst its examples of *sortilegium* ('sorcery').[3] In the later Middle Ages, however, these views were challenged by large scale changes, such as the thirteenth-century establishment of natural magic as an acceptable alternative to demonic magic: the former did not involve spirits, but it did exploit hidden powers of plant and animal substances which could not be explained through humoral theory.[4] In addition to these large-scale changes, individual scholars, churchmen, and lawyers found their own ways of defining the marvellous, supernatural, and forbidden, categories which – though distinct – often overlapped. The negotiations the learned members of these intellectual circles made in relation to charms, natural magic and ritual magic (all of which could be used for healing purposes) have been the subject of many recent studies.[5]

Less attention has been paid, however, to the way that such categories are constructed in anonymous, untheoretical remedy books with uncertain or weak connections to academic or clerical environments, and stronger connections to informal and amateur medical practice.[6] Although general studies of magic and medicine have considered the attitudes and actions of the laity as well as those of clerical and scholarly communities, they do not play close or sustained attention to such remedy books.[7]

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[3] Rider, *Magic and Religion*, p. 14.

[4] Sophie Page, *Magic in Medieval Manuscripts* (London: British Library, 2004), pp. 18–28.

[5] E.g., Lea T. Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice', in *Social History of Medicine*, 16 (2003), 344–66; Rider, *Magic and Religion,* pp. 25–69; Catherine Rider, *Magic and Impotence in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 53–207; Sophie Page, Ma*gic in the Cloister: Pious Motives, Illicit Interests and Occult Approaches to the Medieval Universe* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013); Frank Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic: Illicit Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013); Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[6] An exception is the recent thesis of Laura Mitchell which explores the ways boundaries are negotiated and used to construct identities in three personal or household manuscripts containing various kinds of magical texts, some of which can serve healing purposes. See Laura T. Mitchell, 'Cultural Uses of Magic in Fifteenth-Century England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 2011), pp. 96–203.

[7] E.g., Kieckhefer, *Magic*, pp. 56–94*;* Richard Firth Green, *Elf Queens and Holy Friars: Fairy Beliefs and the Medieval Church* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Michael D. Bailey, *Fearful Spirits,*

Perhaps this is because these collections, conglomerations of multiple different sources, do not usually contain a sustained commentating voice marking particular practices as marvellous, distasteful, or taboo in the way that scholastic and theological writings do. Consequently, it is easy to assume that every recipe or type of practice represented in a collection was embraced and trusted by its owner to the same degree and in the same way. The fact that we have little biographical information about the scribes and owners of the manuscripts also makes it difficult to speculate about their views. We do know that the dangers of potentially demonic practices – such as charms, divination and judicial astrology – were communicated to the laity through sermons and vernacular writings such as the fifteenth-century dialogic text *Dives and Pauper.*[8] But, like the denunciations in patristic, legal and academic writings, the strict prescriptions of these vernacular texts do not reflect the wide range of intertwined and ambiguous practices that existed and the variety of attitudes these could attract.

In many instances, a recipe's inclusion in a collection probably *did* signal some form of acceptance by a scribe or compiler. But there are different kinds of acceptance. Copying a cure might mean that the scribe was seriously considering translating it into practice. But his engagement with the recipe could be more tentative, hypothetical and imaginary, motivated by curiosity or intellectual interest. Some scribes might have copied morally or intellectually ambivalent recipes because they offered them the idea (but not necessarily the reality) of solving their problems. As Laura Mitchell has recently demonstrated, magic texts, charms, and recipes in personal and household collections

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Reasoned Follies: The Boundaries of Superstition in Late Medieval Europe (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

[8] On sermons and the handbooks informing them, see Bailey, *Fearful Spirits*, p. 33. See *Dives and Pauper*, ed. by Priscilla Heath Barnum, EETS os 275, 323 280, 3 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1976–2004), I, Part I (1976), 119 –59.

were often aimed at redressing the kind of social, sexual and economic problems that people experienced on a day-to-day basis.[9] Other scribes may have copied particular remedies because they were intrigued by, and simultaneously disapproving of, their transgressive potential. Such a response could lie behind one late fifteenth-century scribe's annotation of several healing charms: he writes that practice of the charms, which he himself has copied, is prohibited by the Catholic Church.[10] There is clearly an awareness here that a social and cultural boundary is being, or is about to be, crossed.

Written evidence like this, which testifies unequivocally to scribes' and readers' sense of liminality and transgression, is rare in recipe collections but it is not as rare as the lack of critical attention suggests. Close-reading the remedies reveals that some scribes and readers were sensitive to, and sometimes troubled or excited by, those texts' potential to stray into marvellous, strange, disgusting and illicit territories. Although some of these comments are clearly copied wholesale from exemplars, they still remind us of the importance of perspective in constructing the wonderful, strange, revolting, or taboo: how these deviations from the familiar and accepted are understood depends upon the norms of cultures and individual readers. The perspectives of most medieval readers are now impossible to recover. But this chapter will speculate about the range of possible connotations that ingredients and practices *could* have had for readers, arguing that their semantic plurality may have lent recipe collections, and their construction of specific boundaries, a shifting, metamorphic quality in those readers' eyes. This is similar to the flexible dynamic characterising the recipes' temporal structures. Here, however, the stakes are sometimes higher, as it is not merely the

[9] Mitchell, 'Cultural Uses of Magic', pp. 202–3.
[10] HEHL, MS HM 58, ff. 69r, 75v, 84r.

boundary between the magical and the mundane which is crossed and re-crossed, but also the threshold demarcating sin.

Often this metamorphic quality seems unintentional: it occurs because the objects, actions, and ingredients in the recipes participate in a large number of discursive networks at once. The instability is exacerbated by the compilatory form of recipe collections which means that texts drawn from different sources – each with their own ideas about the permitted and the possible – are copied in close proximity. In some instances, though, it seems possible that this metamorphic effect was more deliberate and that compilers playfully exploited the mechanics of perspective when they arranged their collections. Here, social and cultural boundaries shape the formal boundaries of the collection. So, whilst extant scholarship has concentrated upon where the boundaries are drawn in medical texts in order to speculate about *extra-textual* medical practices, I shall end this chapter by redirecting attention back onto the texts themselves as crafted and affective objects. I speculate that boundaries, though they may be ambiguous, shifting and unpredictable, were central to experiences of writing, reading, and interpreting remedy books. In fact, as we shall see, it is this very ambiguity and unpredictability which may have added variety, complexity and imaginative excitement to writer and reader experiences.

Explicit Boundaries

Occasionally, the scribes of recipe collections leave explicit clues that they anticipate the crossing of a boundary. In Chapter Four we saw that similes are often used to help readers negotiate unfamiliar medical processes or ailments. Comparing the preparation

of animal carcasses to the preparation of meats more commonly used in cooking is one common type of simile. One example occurs in a recipe for removing earwigs from an ear where the reader is instructed to take a cat and to 'bowell yt as ye doo a rabett' and then 'roste yt as ye doo a rabett'.[11] In a remedy for a swollen throat, the reader is also instructed to farse þe cate with-in als þou farses a gose'.[12] One might be surprised that these analogies were needed given that cats appear frequently in remedy collections and are used to treat a range of ailments including menstrual pain, earwig infestations, and back pain. [13] The fact that an ingredient appears often in cures might lead one to suppose that medieval readers considered it a commonplace and familiar healing substance. But how frequently an ingredient appears is just one way of measuring its familiarity and it can be misleading. After all, the authors and scribes of the above recipes clearly assumed that their readers would be unsure how to prepare cats; otherwise there would be no need for the cooking analogies.

One might counter this point by arguing that the analogies with other types of meat were merely part of the cures' formulaic language and were copied from manuscript to manuscript unthinkingly; they do not necessarily testify to an *individual's* experience of crossing a boundary.[14] In support of this counter-argument is the fact that the same analogies appear in other kinds of recipes in other languages: for instance, an unusual recipe for roasting and eating a cat in a fifteenth-century copy of a Catalan

[11] CUL MS Ee.1.15, f. 132r.
[12] Ogden, ed., "*Liber de diversis medicinis",* p. 36, lines 32–38.
[13] For a remedy for menstrual pains that involves a cat see Dawson, ed., *A Leechbook*, p. 89 (no. 238). For two remedies for back and sciatic pain involving the fat of a cat see BodL, MS Rawlinson C. 506, ff. 65v, 68v.
[14] Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 27, acknowledges the difficulties that all generic conventions pose to understanding medieval emotional responses.

cookbook also instructs the reader to cut up the cat like one would a rabbit. [15] The rabbit comparison seems, then, to have become commonplace in instructional writing in general. And yet, it was not necessarily just hollow textual convention. The fact that scribes continued to invest the effort of copying it might suggest that it still retained currency. It might also suggest that medieval readers were not *using* the recipes they copied as often as we assume: they did not become desensitised to the strangeness of disembowelling a cat.

Similar traces of writers and readers crossing into unfamiliar territory occur in relation to unpleasant ingredients.[16] Medieval recipes contain animal products, such as faeces, fat, bones, or genitals, that modern readers might balk at ingesting or rubbing into their skin. Such recipes, however, are usually copied without comment, making it easy to assume that medieval readers were entirely comfortable using such products.[17] But this is not necessarily the case. A handful of recipes that I have examined contain instructions to conceal the distasteful ingredient from the patient, perhaps for fear that he or she will refuse the medicine. For instance, the following powder is suggested for those who become drunk too easily or are already drunk:

> Medicine for man or woman þat wil be liȝtly dronke or is dronke . Take swalewes and brenne hem and make pouder þer of [...] and after þat time schal he neuer be dronke more but late not þat man be ware what he drinkeþ[18]

[15] See *Libre del Coch*, ed. by Veronika Leimgruber (Barcelona: Curial Edicions Catalanes, 1977), p. 77, no. 122.
[16] On the belief of Nicholas of Poland, an educated thirteenth-century practitioner, that God had instilled the most disgusting substances with the greatest healing powers, see William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 77.
[17] E.g., Rawcliffe, 'Curing Bodies and Healing Souls', p. 122.
[18] BL, MS Additional 34210, f. 22r.

Similar disguises are recommended in a remedy for epilepsy where the sting of a bee is to be concealed in ale so that the patient 'wete it not'[19] and in a remedy for jaundice where earthworms should be crushed 'so small that þe syke may nat se ne witt what it is for lothynge'.[20] In the same recipe in another collection, 'lothynge' ('revulsion') is replaced by 'wlatyng' ('nausea') which adds a more visceral dimension to the disgust.[21] A final example of anticipated distaste occurs in a remedy for a tooth cavity:

> Tak a rauenes turde and put hit in þe holewe toght bot furst colore hit with <peletur> þe jus of peletur of spayne þat þe seke knowe noht what hit be[22]

Animal excrement is one of the most common ingredients in medieval remedies but, in this recipe, it is concealed from the patient through dye made from plant sap. These disguises evoke the recommendations in many learned medical writings that unpleasant tasting medical ingredients should be concealed in sweeter, more pleasant substances.[23] All of these texts again demonstrate that the ubiquity of an ingredient within recipe collections did not necessarily mean that it was considered mundane or unremarkable by readers: the disguises reflect – and promote – a reader response which considers certain ingredients to be affronts to the normal relationship between animal and human bodies.

In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Bruno Latour claims that, since the seventeenth century, modern society has sharply segregated humans and things, subjects and objects, nature and culture, and that this segregation has paradoxically arisen because modern society produces more hybrid forms than any preceding culture.

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[19] BL, MS Harley 2378, f. 142v.
[20] Dawson, ed., *A Leechbook,* p. 154 (no. 465).
[21] BL, MS Sloane 3666, ff. 44v–45r.
[22] TCC, MS O.2.13, f. 113v.
[23] On electuaries, see Mount, *Dragon's Blood*, pp. 115–16, 134.

It avoids acknowledging this by rigidly delimiting these categories.[24] This anxiety about hybridity may be one reason why modern popular culture has often portrayed medieval medical practice as grotesquely at ease in its mixing of bodies, things, animals, and plants. Latour, however, suggests that premodern cultures actually thought carefully and constantly about hybrids, dwelling 'endlessly and obsessively on those connections between nature and culture'.[25] The above analogies and instructions are also evidence that medieval writers and readers worried about the appropriate relationship between their bodies and those of the creatures around them and that they could be disgusted by certain conjunctions of human and animal. Perspective is, however, integral to the construction of these boundaries: an unexperienced amateur medical practitioner may find it strange to chop up cats but an experienced one might be very familiar with the process. Similarly, a patient may find it strange and distasteful to swallow powdered swallows or the stinger of a bee but for a practitioner it could be part of the everyday. These instances remind us, then, that the recipes inevitably evoked diverse responses from diverse readers depending upon their past experience. This may seem like an obvious point but it is easy to forget and assume that, because the recipes are often formulaic texts, they always invited formulaic responses. Indeed, it is the fact that responses to the otherness of the recipes could themselves become conventional and formulaic parts of the texts (as is the case with the rabbit analogy) that makes them so hard to detect.

[24] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 41.
[25] Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, p. 41.

Shifting Boundaries

This kind of written recognition of boundaries is rare in remedy collections. But what is clear is that the substances and practices represented in the collections belonged to a multitude of distinct but overlapping discursive networks, which could each imbue those substances and practices with a specific set of associations. By examining these different discursive networks, we can begin to reconstruct the variety of perspectives available to readers of vernacular remedy books and the multitude of ways they may have constructed the boundaries demarcating the strange, familiar, permitted, and forbidden. Scholars such as Lea Olsan and Catherine Rider have already reconstructed the range of attitudes certain practices attracted in pastoral, legal, and academic medical writings: these include charms, lists of lucky or unlucky days, and texts using divination to predict the fate of the sick.[26] Each of these could appear marvellous or mundane, permitted or prohibited to different readers. Their work is relevant to the study of recipes because all of these texts are sometimes appended to or embedded within remedy books. Less studied, however, is the *stuff* cluttering the recipes – the objects, animal parts, and herbs – which also draws multiple discourses and categories into conversation.

One possible way of defining what a mundane recipe would have looked like to a medieval reader is by the things within it. It might contain readily available, local ingredients such as the herbs sage, betony, and rue which were all native to England. It might also contain substances and objects present in households of all means. For instance, a remedy for staunching blood requires 'þe felte of an olde hatte',[27] while a

[26] Lea T. Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers', 344–66 and Rider, *Magic and Religion,* pp. 55–61.
[27] TCC, MS R.14.51, f. 25r. See also TCC, MS O.1.65, f. 249r.

cure for epilepsy involves urinating in a shoe and giving the sick that urine to drink.[28] In another remedy for the scab, the writer or scribe explicitly evokes a mundane domestic space by instructing the reader to collect 'þe soot of the howse'.[29] Part of an unremarkable, everyday environment, these things are quite literally *mundane* or *mundanus* which in medieval Latin meant 'of this world'.[30]

But even these mundane ingredients could become marvellous. For example, tutty, made from zinc oxide, is a fairly common ingredient in medical recipes: 'A colliry in þe waxing of þe sekenes to do awei þe ache: Take [...] ceruse [...] cathmie, tuchie (tutty), gummi arabike, dragagantum....'.[31] Because *tutie* can be made from the char inside chimneys, it closely resembles the 'soot of the howse'. However, unlike that soot, tutty was considered a spice by medieval writers; hence the Florentine merchant Francesco Pegolotti claimed that tutty was imported from Alexandria in Egypt. [32] This shows how two very similar substances could evoke completely different connotations: while one was part of the everyday domestic environment, the other was a product of the exotic Eastern spice trade, which, as Paul Freedman has claimed, had uncertain geographical co-ordinates for many people in the West.[33] Freedman argues that the perceived mysteriousness and strangeness of the East must have imbued these spices with a marvellous, otherworldly quality. [34]

This process, however, also works in reverse: the marvellous can rapidly become mundane. Medieval thinkers were very sensitive to the importance of distance

[28] CUL, MS Dd.10.44, f. 131v.
[29] BodL, MS Ashmole 1477, ff. 35v–36r. See also NLW, MS 572, f. 11v.
[30] See *DMLBS, mundanus, adj*., entry 2.
[31] Getz, ed., *Healing and Society*, p. 46.
[32] On tutty, see Freedman, *Out of the East*, p. 13.
[33]Freedman, *Out of the East,* pp. 95–103.
[34] Freedman, *Out of the East*, pp. 2, 5, 104.

and rarity in the cultivation of wonder: St. Augustine's claim that the reaction of lime to fire would appear marvellous to readers if it occurred in India and was heard of rarely was often repeated.[35] This is relevant to conceptions of spices such as tutty: though the spice trade spanned continents, the apothecaries, spicers and grocers who sold the spices to medical practitioners and amateur healers were an established part of many urban scenes.[36] As Christopher Bonfield argues, there was a 'proliferation of apothecaries' stalls and shops in the later Middle Ages and these shops offered a wide range of goods: for instance, a 1415 inventory of the wares of John Hexham, an apothecary in London, lists sweet-flag root, pulp of cassia and fistula fruit.[37] These goods came from the same distant shores as the spices. So, although many spices were still relatively expensive and therefore luxury items, their marvellous and exotic qualities may at times have been circumscribed by their proximity.[38] This is the implication in Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale* when one of the three revellers attempts to buy poison from an apothecary. While no mention is made of the exotic origins of the apothecary's wares, Chaucer's account emphasises the reveller's quick and easy transition into urban space, thereby suggesting the closeness and convenience of the apothecary shop:

> And forth he gooth, no lenger wolde he tarie,
> *Into the toun*, unto a pothecarie[39]

[35] Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity,* p. 48.
[36] On apothecaries, their guild structure and role in the community, see Getz, ed., *Healing and Society*, p. xxix; Mount, *Dragon's Blood*, pp. 69–72; G.E. Trease, 'The Spicers and Apothecaries of the Royal Household in the Reigns of Henry III, Edward I and Edward II', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 3 (1959), 19–52.
[37] Christopher Bonfield, 'The First Instrument of Medicine: Diet and Regimens of Health in Late Medieval England', in Clark and Danbury, eds, '*A verray parfit praktisour*', pp. 99–119 (p. 112).
[38] Freedman, *Out of the East*, pp. 126–29. Bonfield, 'The First Instrument', p. 112, also makes this point.
[39] *The Pardoner's Tale,* in *Riverside,* lines 851–52, italics mine. See also *The Nun's Priest's Tale,* in *Riverside,* line 2948: 'Though in this toun is noon apothecarie...'.

Integrated into the everyday world of commerce, the seller of spices and his wares here become part of the mundane urban environment.

Other substances could metamorphosise between categories in similar ways. For example, Jerry Stannard has termed 'magiferous' herbs such as vervain and St. John's wort which change their properties under particular forces or conditions. [40] Vervain, hot and dry according to medieval humoral theory, is often used in unremarkable herbal concoctions: 'Take bitayne verveyn celidony wormod weybred ruw walwort sawge fyue cornys of peper and hony and seith all in water and drynke hit fastynge'.[41] And yet, since classical times, the plant has been connected to magicians and necromancers. According to Pliny the Elder, vervain was used by past civilisations to cleanse and purify houses; the Zoroastrian Persian Priests known as the Magi also asserted that those who had been rubbed with vervain obtain their wishes, win friends, eradicate fevers and cure all diseases.[42] This reputation endured into the later Middle Ages. In a mid to late fifteenth-century collection of recipes, a reader is instructed to use vervain tempered with wine or water and crushed with various other herbs to heal bites from venomous beasts, fevers of various types and gall or kidney stones. The herb still seems to be working here through its natural properties and humoral qualities. However, immediately after these remedies, it is written 'Also who so berithe verven vppon them shall haue gret loue of euerybody so haue his askyng yf it be resonabull'.[43] In another medical and miscellaneous collection, it is claimed that vervain will attract

[40]Jerry Stannard, 'Magiferous Plants and Magic in Medieval Medical Botany', in *Herbs and Herbalism in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 33–46.
[41] WT, MS 136, f. 1r. See BL, MS Harley 2390, f. 119v for a list of the humoral qualities of different herbs.
[42]Pliny, *Natural History*, trans. by H. Rackham, W. H. S. Jones and D.E. Eichholz, 10 vols (London: Heinemann, 1938–1963), VII (1956), Bk XXV, Ch. LIX. Cited in Stannard, 'Magiferous Plants', p. 38.
[43] TCC, MS R.14.52, f. 270r.

fish with its smell, keep rats and cats away from one's house, and prevent a woman who is not a virgin from sitting down. The text also proclaims that if someone drinks the juice of vervain he or she will be invisible until they drink holy water; a thief will expose himself if touched with vervain, and a man who wears the herb upon him shall not be injured by his enemies.[44]

In these examples, all kinds of boundaries are crossed: the visible becomes invisible, active agents become passive targets, and victims become vanquishers. In the process, a commonplace, easily attainable herb capable of healing everyday afflictions through its natural qualities is also shown to have extraordinary powers, working in ways that may be considered magical: this could be interpreted as a kind of natural magic, if the wondrous results were thought to be brought about through the plant's hidden virtues and not through the aid of demonic spirits.[45] But the fact that the invisible drinker of vervain will become visible after drinking holy water suggests that that recipe could also be perceived to have shadier, demonic workings. These herbs and spices demonstrate, then, the metamorphic quality of recipes: the penumbra of connotations surrounding individual ingredients means that they can appear marvellous or mundane, licit or illicit, depending upon the perspective from which they are viewed and the prior experience or knowledge of the reader. Focusing upon the beaver hat that belongs to Chaucer's Merchant, Kellie Robertson has recently argued that this semantic instability means that 'premodern subjects are often shown to be at the mercy of "their" things'.[46] Robertson claims that, whilst human beings select which objects in their

[44] BL, MS Additional 12195, f. 149r–v.
[45] On natural magic, see Page, *Magic in Medieval Manuscripts*, pp. 18–28.
[46] Kellie Robertson, 'Medieval Things: Materiality, Historicism, and the Premodern Object', *Literature Compass,* 5 (2008), 1060–80 (p. 1063).

surroundings to focus upon, wear, and adorn their houses and texts with, those objects carry with them a penumbra of connotations that cannot be deployed selectively or dispelled at will by their human owners.[47] This effect seems even more intense in recipe collections, where texts using ingredients in different ways are copied in close proximity to one another. Because there is no continual authoritative voice, circumscribing this play of connotations, it is left up to later readers to decide how, or whether, a boundary is constructed between such different recipes.

Dead Men's Heads

We see, then, how a lack of explicit boundaries could create more interpretive freedom. But this interpretative freedom could have dangerous moral consequences. The author of one of the above texts on vervain appears to have recognised this. Although he does not explain how vervain can ensure that all the requests of a man or woman will have favourable outcomes (and whether this works through natural or demonic magic), he acknowledges that the freedom such a power would bestow could be misused: he therefore circumscribes that power by stipulating that whoever uses the herb in this way will only 'haue his askyng yf it be resonabull', a word which could mean 'rational', 'appropriate', 'sensible' or 'natural'.

In other places, though, there is no authorial or scribal voice to resolve the moral dilemmas created by the ingredients and practices represented in recipes, not all of which are unequivocally licit. Human remains are one such problematic substance. In the collections that I have consulted, five recipes require body parts of dead human

[47] Robertson, 'Medieval Things', p. 1070.

beings. A remedy for epilepsy in a collection copied in the first half of the fifteenth century requires the sick to drink powder made from a 'ded mannes hed' and another remedy in a different manuscript for the same affliction instructs the reader to make the bone of a dead man into powder and drink it.[48] Elsewhere, two similar remedies for sore penises call for the powdered 'bone of a dede man'.[49] Finally, a fifteenth-century remedy for warts requires 'þe erþe within a dede manys schulle'.[50] Three of these remedies occur in intellectually accessible, untheoretical, predominantly vernacular collections which may have been copied by individuals for private use.[51] The fourth occurs in a similarly accessible collection which seems to have been copied by multiple hands in a collaborative enterprise.[52] The fifth – the wart remedy – occurs in MS Ashmole 1443, the manuscript examined in Chapter One because it contains accessible, vernacular texts but also sometimes displays a more learned theoretical style. It is likely, then, that remedies involving human remains occurred in collections read by people with different levels of knowledge and experience.

The remedies for a sore penis are the only ones listed for that affliction on the manuscript page on which they appear. In contrast, the other three remedies for epilepsy and warts are surrounded by alternative cures for the same ailments. Although the humoral workings of these alternative cures are not made explicit, many deploy herbs and animal substances, such as sheep's fat, tormentil, and animal excrement, which appear frequently in the theoretically-grounded remedies and empirical *experimenta* gathered in scholastic collections. Two of the manuscripts, however, also

[48] Respectively, BodL, MS Laud misc. 553, f. 46r and BodL, MS Rawlinson C. 506, f. 104v.
[49]BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part II, p. 23 and TCC, MS R.14.39, f. 63v.
[50] BodL, MS Ashmole 1443, p. 328.
[51] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part II, p. 23; BodL, MS Rawlinson C. 506, f. 104v; TCC, MS R.14.39, f. 63v.
[52] BodL, MS Laud misc. 553, f. 46r.

contain a large number of cures which appear to work through different, potentially less acceptable means.[53] For instance, there are a large number of charms and amulets, some of which are made from herbs and some of which are made from less easily attainable ingredients such as wolf's skin.[54] It is never explicit whether these amulets are working purely through natural occult properties, divine power, or demonic mediation. Furthermore, though many of the charms or ritual behaviours to be performed involve Christian language, others use unfamiliar names; this second kind had long been considered problematic by pastoral writers because it could lead to individuals unwittingly evoking the assistance of demons.[55] In these manuscripts, then, the remedies involving human remains are surrounded by texts belonging to many different areas of medical practice, some of which are ambiguously poised between the licit and the illicit. Because of such instability, this framework of surrounding texts offers us little help in interpreting the above five recipes.

The use of skeletons and corpses for healing purposes is itself a practice embedded in several different discursive networks, some of which are also morally problematic. It is therefore surprising that this ingredient, which puzzles on account of its ambiguity, has received little attention in studies of magic and medicine.[56] One lens through which to interpret the remedies is provided by the Arabic and Greek sources from which they might have derived: the Arabic medical authority, Avicenna, recommended using human skulls to treat epilepsy.[57] Another Arabic thinker, Ibn al-

[53] BodL, MS Rawlinson C. 506, f. 104v and BodL MS Laud misc. 553, f. 46r.
[54] BodL, MS Laud misc. 553, f. 46r.
[55] Rider, *Magic and Religion*, p. 56.
[56] An exception is Richard Sugg, *Mummies, Cannibals, and Vampires: The History of Corpse Medicine from the Renaissance to the Victorians* (London: Routledge, 2011), but this discusses little medieval material.
[57] Housni Alkhateeb Shehada, *Mamluks and Animals: Veterinary Medicine in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 356, fn. 105.

Baytār, attributed to Galen the claim that human bones can be used to dry surplus humours in the body.[58] It is not clear whether Galen ever did directly advocate this practice; as Caroline Petit notes, it seems unlikely that he would recommend it explicitly, given that he described Xenocrates' therapeutic uses of human bones as 'forbidden by law'.[59] Interestingly, though, he also writes that such practices are 'not perverted' ('aselgē'), suggesting that he did not find them naturally or morally wayward.[60]

The cures in the above remedy books could also have been viewed by late medieval readers as examples of natural magic, as the head of a corpse was sometimes claimed to possess an inherent vivifying power: in an Arabic work by Ibn Al Jazzar (d. 974), known in its Latin translation as *De proprietatibus,* it is written that when the skull of an old man is placed in a dove or pigeon cote, the birds will increase in number greatly.[61] These associations with intellectually acceptable medical theories and authorities probably explain why the cures involving human remains come to be copied alongside more innocuous herbal preparations in late medieval remedy books.

These traditions, however, are not referenced or explained in the remedy books and it seems unlikely that all readers of these compilations would have prior knowledge of them. Other cultural discourses might have offered models for this therapeutic practice that were more accessible to the varied readership of vernacular remedy collections. One such discourse is hagiography, which was communicated to the

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[58] Shehada, *Mamluks and Animals*, p. 356, fn. 105.
[59] Caroline Petit, 'Galen, Pharmacology and the Boundaries of Medicine: A Reassessment', in *Collecting Recipes: Byzantine and Jewish Pharmacology in Dialogue,* ed. by Lennart Lehmhaus and Matteo Martelli (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 51–79 (pp. 56, 57, 61 for Greek and English versions).
[60] Petit, 'Galen', pp. 56, 57, 61.
[61] See Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 125, f. 124v and Sophie Page, *Magic in the Cloister*, pp. 71, 186. On the text's connection to natural magic, see Maaike Van der Lugt, '"Abominable Mixtures": The *Liber Vaccae* in the Medieval West, or the Dangers and Attractions of Natural Magic', *Traditio,* 64 (2009), 229–77.

laity through texts, paintings, church architecture, and feast days. Aptly, a particularly close parallel appears in the story of the patron saints of physic and surgery, Cosmas and Damian.[62] These third-century physicians, piously devoted to the early Christian cause, were credited with the miraculous cure of a churchman from Rome whose leg was consumed by infection. After praying to Cosmas and Damian, the churchman dreamt that the brothers amputated his leg and replaced it with the leg of an Ethiopian man buried in a local churchyard on the same day. When he woke, he found that the interracial transplant had really occurred and his leg had been cured.[63] This narrative has particularly close parallels with one of the above remedies for a sore penis because that remedy specifically instructs the reader to 'take a boon of a dede man *in þe chyrche ȝerde'*.[64] Physically, it would have been easy for a medieval reader to attain the required bones: medieval churchyards were very full and graves were normally unmarked and shallow, meaning that, as the ground was being prepared for a burial, remains of older corpses were disturbed.[65] The story of the two saints seems to affirm that such action is morally and spiritually permissible if performed by one pious person for another with good will and healing intent.

This does not, however, seem to have been a common view in the everyday social, legal and religious practices of late medieval life. As Caroline Walker Bynum notes, by the twelfth-century, there was a widespread insistence that Christian remains

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[62] See Toni Mount, *A Year in the Life of Medieval England* (Stroud: Amberly Publishing, 2016), p. 238 for information about these saints, their feast-day and the churches dedicated to them in Rome and Constantinople (which both became celebrated places of medieval pilgrimage).
[63] Jack Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies: Life, Death, and Art in the Middle Ages* (London: Profile Books, 2018), pp. 92–94.
[64] TCC, MS R.14.39, f. 63v, italics mine. There is also a possible pun here as *yerd* could mean penis: see *MED*, yerd, n.2, entry 5(a).
[65] N. J. G Pounds, *A History of the English Parish: The Culture of Religion from Augustine to Victoria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 420–25.

needed to be buried in consecrated ground, be this a church-yard, ossuary, or a reliquary stored in a religious house; burial in non-consecrated ground marked one as a sinner.[66] Punishments issued to those who disturbed graves or stole bodies – sometimes in the interests of anatomic dissection – show that the removal of Christian remains from sacred sites, even in the interests of medical progress, was strongly prohibited in medieval Europe.[67] Viewed from this perspective, then, the remedies ask a reader to perform an action that was widely considered sinful.

Other problematic associations also surrounded human remains: they, or things that had come into contact with them, could be associated with more illicit forms of magic. In his Latin medical handbook, *Rosa medicinae*, John of Gaddesden cites the claims of earlier medical writers Constantine the African (d. before 1099) and Urso of Salerno (d. 1225) that placing a needle with which a dead man has been sewn up in one's bed or clothes causes impotence, preventing the erection of the penis.[68] Impotence is here presented as a product of harmful symbolic magic: the needle resembles and brings about the affliction of the man's genitals. This association of impotence with magical causes and dead bodies perhaps explains why the bone of a dead man is used in the above remedies to treat a sore penis: although there it is simply ground to powder and strewn upon the reproductive organ without any other ritual, it may contain echoes of older, more explicitly magical cures for impotence which worked

[66] Caroline Walker Bynum, T*he Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 204.
[67] Danielle Jacquart, 'Medical Scholasticism', in *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages,* ed. by Mirko D. Grmek and others (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 197–240 (p. 224); Katherine Park, 'The Criminal and the Saintly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly,* 47 (1994), 1–33 (p. 7).
[68] Rider, *Magic and Impotence*, p. 163.

upon the premise that magic, be it natural or demonic, cures magic. [69] Another such cure occurs in the thirteenth-century *Compendium* of Gilbert the Englishman: it involves fumigating something (perhaps the female genitalia) with a dead man's tooth.[70] There is no explanation of how this cure works: Gilbert merely introduces the remedy as an 'empiricum', perhaps suggesting that he wished it to be considered a type of natural occult cure, rather than a demonic one.

Acquiring human skulls was also a problematic act because skulls were frequently associated with necromancy. This was a type of black magic condemned by ecclesiastical and civic authorities because it involved invoking demons and spirits of the dead to see the future or achieve one's ends. The connection between skulls and necromancy is illustrated by a legal case heard by the King's Bench in 1371: a man named John Crok was ordered by the King's justices in the civil courts to bring his bag for examination because rumours had circulated alleging that the bag contained a dead man's head. When he was questioned, Crok claimed that the head was the head of a Saracen that he had purchased in Spain. He argued that he needed the head to act as a container to house a magical spirit; the spirit could then speak through the head's mouth and listen through its ears. Crok was also carrying in the bag a book containing 'experiments', a word which could refer to medical remedies or alchemical reactions but which, given Crok's alleged attentions, probably referred to acts of necromancy. The bag and all of its contents were burnt and Crok was ordered to swear upon the Gospels that

[69] Epilepsy was also often associated with magical causes. See Catherine Rider, 'Demons and Mental Disorder in Late Medieval Medicine', in *Mental (Dis)order in Later Medieval Europe,* ed. by Sara Katajala-Peltomaa and Susanna Niiranen (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 47–69 (pp. 49–55, 64, 67).
[70] 'Aliud empericum Suffumigetur cum dente hominis mortui vel soleis castrati. vel bibat herbam crescentem per medium lapidis perforati.' See Gilbertus Anglicus, *Compendium medicine* (Lyon, 1510), f. 287ar; also cited in Rider, *Magic and Impotence*, p. 164.

he would not henceforth use such things in a way that contravened the faith of the Holy Church.[71]

Although none of the five remedies described above involve using human remains in necromantic rituals, the scribe who copies the epilepsy remedy that instructs the reader to drink the powder of 'a ded mans bon' also copies earlier in the manuscript several Latin and English texts that involve conjuring spirits for purposes such as knowing whether a man shall live or die.[72] The remedy occurs over sixty folios after the necromantic texts (with many natural herbal remedies in between) so it is not certain that the scribe connected the two. Nevertheless, the necromantic texts reveal that the scribe was interested in exploring such illicit practices and render it possible that he was aware of the shadier associations of possessing human skeletons.

Viewed through the lens of all of these associated discourses, the use of human remains to heal the sick seems poised between the permissible and the prohibited. There is one thing, though, which may have made many of the above instances more socially acceptable: the corpses of social or religious outsiders are used. Crok's punishment, after all, seems fairly lenient and, although the court record justifies this by claiming that he had not yet done any harm with the head, it also probably had something to do with the fact that the head belonged to a Saracen, the religious enemy.[73] Saracen heads were frequently mocked, abused, and mistreated in medieval culture: for example, the romance *Richard Coeur de Lion* depicts the English King Richard

[71] See *Select Cases in the Court of King's Bench Under Edward III*: *Volume VI*, ed. by G.O Sayles, Selden Society 82 (London: Quaritch, 1965), p. 163 for the original Latin and an English translation. This anecdote is also described in Getz, *Medicine in the English Middle Ages*, p. 79.
[72] BodL, MS Rawlinson C.506, ff. 39r–41r.
[73] Sayles, ed., *Select Cases in the Court of King's Bench,* p. 163.

I eating the head of a Saracen.[74] In her analysis of this romance, Nicola McDonald demonstrates that late medieval culinary recipes existed instructing readers how to bake pies in the shape of Saracen heads; she also shows that the cannibalism in the romance is described in language borrowed from culinary recipes. Through this discourse, the author of the romance 'renders what is otherwise alien and forbidden a familiar, and thus edible, food; it effectively diffuses the taboo that makes man-eating, if not unthinkable, unpalatable.'[75]

In other examples of healing uses of human remains, the unthinkable is made similarly thinkable through the use of outsider bodies: in the hagiography of Cosmas and Damien the churchman's new leg is taken from a Christian buried in consecrated ground, but the Christian is explicitly identified as Ethiopian. In many medieval western European narratives, religious otherness is marked by dark skin.[76] In this hagiography, skin colour is not indicative of religion but, as a racial marker, it still could function as a sign of otherness; there were, after all, believed to be a large population of Christian Ethiopians living in India, that distant and mysterious realm.[77] In other surviving European narratives, the bodies of different social and religious outsiders are used for healing purposes: for instance, a woman from Todi named Matteuccia Francisci was burned at the stake in 1421 because she had taught that one could cure illness by burying a bone from an unbaptised baby at a crossroad and saying different prayers and

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[74] See *Der Mittelenglische Versroman über Richard Löwenherz*, ed. by Karl Brunner (Vienna: Braumüller, 1913), lines 3194–226.

[75] Nicola McDonald, 'Eating People and the Alimentary Logic of *Richard Coeur de Lion'*, in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance,* ed. by Nicola McDonald (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) pp. 124–50 (p. 134). See Brunner, ed., *Der Mittelenglische Versroman,* lines 3088–93.

[76] E.g. *King of Tars,* where the sultan's skin turns from black to white when he is converted. A few medieval narratives about black Christians and saints do, however, exist: see Heng, *Invention of Race,* pp. 200–10, 222–42.

[77] Freedman, *Out of the East,* pp. 95–103.

charms over it for nine days.[78] The unbaptised baby is an outsider to the Christian religion; the liminal space of the crossroads was also associated with outsiders as it was where criminals were hanged, so that their spirits could not torment the living.[79] The use of outsider bodies therefore functions as an ambiguous sign in these accounts: on the one hand, it exacerbates the demonic element of the magic rituals, signalling that the enactor is crossing a boundary between the licit and the illicit and transitioning from a social insider to an outsider. On the other hand, it paradoxically renders those rituals less shocking: using the bodies of those outside central social and religious institutions is far less of an affront – and threat – to those within.

In the light of this, it is surprising that the remedies in the Middle English collections described above do *not* specify that the skeletons must come from outsiders. Instead, as we have seen, one explicitly instructs the reader to take the bone from *inside* a churchyard. Furthermore, four of the recipes are clear that the bones themselves are to be used in the cures. This contrasts with recipes in both academic and informal collections where the body is not treated by the remains themselves but by things that have fleetingly come into contact with them: for instance, a remedy for a *mormal* (a scabbed ulcer) involves washing it with 'þe water þat a ded mon was ywasche wyþ'.[80] Gilbert the Englishman's impotence remedy involving a dead man's tooth seems similarly cautious: although it is still part of the body, a tooth seems small, peripheral, and detachable.

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[78] Kieckhefer, *Magic*, p. 59.

[79] Derek A. Rivard, *Blessing the World: RItual and Lay Piety in Medieval Religion* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), p. 75, fn. 97.

[80] BL, MS Additional 33996, f. 134r. This remedy could be deploying *mummia,* a secretion from embalmed bodies which was frequently listed in medical remedies, including those originating from learned authorities. See *MED, mummie*, n., and the range of examples.

Why are the authors, compilers and scribes of recipe collections not equally cautious? Laura Mitchell has recently examined other informal miscellaneous collections containing charms, experiments and recipes requiring ingredients that, like human skulls, were often used in necromantic rituals (for instance, the hoopoe).[81] The texts often claim to fulfil everyday social, sexual and economic desires such as helping a man attract women or protecting him in the marketplace. Consequently, Mitchell argues that the recipes, regardless of whether they were actually attempted, offer relief from and gratification of these everyday needs through the imagined idea of fulfilment. This could also be true of the epilepsy and impotence remedies: they offer the prospect of a cure, even if the scribe was not truly willing to translate them into action.

Another reading, however, is also possible: given that some of the remedies are surrounded by alternative cures for epilepsy and impotence which use less problematic ingredients, it could be that satisfaction was derived less from an imagined endpoint and more from an imagined means: the cures satisfied readers' desires to envisage transgressive actions, such as stealing a body, without actually demanding that they perform any wrongdoing. This appeal to dark impulses is heightened in the remedy which explicitly instructs the reader to locate the body in 'þe chyrche ȝerde'. Such specificity – which seems gratuitous in a practical sense given that everybody knows where to find a dead body – recalls the less controversial descriptions of plant habitats that one sometimes finds in herbals and remedies: 'take [...] an handfull of pelatory that growyth ouer schurche wallis or castell wallys'.[82] Just like the use of recipe language in *Richard Coeur de Lion* to describe the eating of a human head, this familiar discourse

[81] Mitchell, 'Cultural Uses', pp. 199–200. The remedy for epilepsy using human remains on BodL, MS Rawlinson 506, f. 104v is also followed by a remedy for epilepsy involving a hoopoe.
[82] BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, p. 203.

both normalises and renders strange the transgressive act: for a moment, it makes the action seem tantalisingly possible and culturally acceptable but, as soon as one fully comprehends the nature of the act, one feels doubly alienated from it through the contrast with the familiar. The instruction consequently seems designed to put in motion a peculiar dynamic of temptation and restraint. A similar effect is cultivated in one of the remedies for epilepsy: the scribe explicitly states that it is 'þe best' of the medicines used, which can be read as a playful challenge to the reader to translate it into action.[83]

It is productive to consider the responses such recipes may have evoked alongside those deliberately cultivated in fabliaux, literary narratives powered by witty deceptions and inappropriate desires which invite readers to imagine crossing all kinds of socially enforced boundaries. The plots of these narratives often involve dead bodies in taboo practices: corpses are buried, exhumed, disguised, imitated and debased; they are given the exact opposite of the properly observed burial rites so highly esteemed in late medieval culture. For example, *Dane Hew, Munk of Leicestre* is a comic narrative which only survives in sixteenth-century print but which, on the basis of linguistic evidence, probably circulated in the fifteenth century or before.[84] In this tale, the eponymous monk is killed by a tailor with whose wife he has tried to have sexual relations. After he has been killed, however, he is hung once and slain another four times when his corpse – made to look alive for the purposes of trickery and deception – is used to deceive a string of unwitting individuals. Only at the end of the tale is Dane Hew finally buried. Analysing one of the French analogues for this narrative, Howard

[83] BodL, MS Rawlinson C. 506, f. 104v.
[84] *Ten Fifteenth-Century Comic Poems,* ed. by Melissa M. Furrow (New York: Garland, 1985), p. 161.

Bloch has suggested that circulating corpses in fabliaux act as an analogy for the unstable relationship between signifier and signified which these tales – with their puns, linguistic deceptions, and misunderstandings – draw out:

> The body is a shifter. As it circulates it derives its significance from the subject with which it comes into contact, the subject who is obliged to invest it with meaning. Where the process becomes complicated, however, is in its very multiplicity.[85]

Bloch argues that, because the body, passed from person to person, can mean anything to anyone, it – like language – risks meaning nothing at all. There are clear parallels here with the way fragmented human corpses work in the recipes: participating in multiple cultural discourses and surrounded by other ambiguous remedies, they too can function as empty and ambiguous signifiers which can mean very different things to different people.

In fabliaux, a reader knows what to expect: we find ourselves in a fictional world where there are different, and often fewer, rules about what it is acceptable to desire and do, but we usually know what those rules are and that they are only supposed to apply within the text. In other words, we are only meant to indulge the dark or base desires we see represented in the text through reading it. The recipes are less clear in this respect: although they may not actually have been translated into practice, the imperatives they contain invite readers to *imagine* translating them into practice more emphatically than fabliaux. One might wonder what the relationship was for readers between these transgressive recipes and the more orthodox ones surrounding them? Do the orthodox texts make the remedies' illicit elements stand out

[85] Howard Bloch, *The Scandal of the Fabliaux* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 67–68.

more or are the subversive recipes contained, and rendered safe, by those reminders of more acceptable practice? These questions echo those raised by Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque and its many critical permutations: it has long been debated whether the violation of convention that carnivalesque rituals involve actually ends up reaffirming order, rather than subverting and challenging it as Bakhtin claims.[86] Allon White and Peter Stallybrass have warned against trying to essentialise carnival by proclaiming it 'intrinsically conservative or radical'.[87] This warning seems particularly apt in relation to remedy collections: because there is no guiding narrative voice, there is no way of knowing how the scribes of these collections understood the relationship between orthodox and transgressive remedies. Inscription marks and annotations by later readers in many manuscripts show that these collections often passed through multiple hands and multiple generations: these later readers would have been free to construct such relationships as they liked.[88]

Playing with Boundaries

In all of the above examples, the metamorphic dynamic of the remedy books seems largely to be the result of the formal (or, in many cases, informal) conventions of the genre and its typical manuscript layout: whether the remedy books are scruffy personal

[86] A brief but useful summary of the arguments of some critics who have questioned this aspect of Bakhtin's theory appears in Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 13–14.
[87] Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics*, p. 15.
[88] Although we often have little biographical information for owners of medieval recipes collections, it seems likely that some were handed down through families in the same way that Elaine Leong has demonstrated several early modern recipe collections were: Elaine Leong, 'Collecting Knowledge for the Family: Recipes, Gender and Practical Knowledge in the Early Modern English Household', *Centaurus,* 55 (2013), 81–103. However, the role of women in recording this knowledge was probably less pronounced in the fifteenth century than in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. On female ownership of medieval medical writings, see Green, 'The Possibilities of Literacy', pp. 1–76.

notebooks, or neatly executed productions, they all list recipe after recipe, bringing countless ingredients, processes and discourses into unpredictable conversations. Form produces effect. Sometimes, though, it seems possible that this process was reversed and that compilers consciously arranged their collections around the concept of perspectival play. This seems most likely in recipe collections which (like the verse herbal examined in Chapters One and Three) contain a mix of medical cures, miscellaneous recipes, and practical jokes. One scruffy early Tudor collection of recipes, MS Ashmole 1389, contains an extensive collection of medical recipes, but copied between them and only separated from them by two blank leaves are a large number of instructions, some in Latin, some in English, to make men and women take off their clothes; to make men dance; to make quicksilver into a contraceptive; to prepare an anaesthetic for animals that will make them seem dead; to make a man seem headless; to make all men in a house have two heads; to make eggs leap out of a pan; to make vinegar from wine; to ensure that a man shall never be drunk; to make oneself invisible, to make a dead capon cry out when roasted upon the spit; to make a solution from birdlime and oil; to make a copper penny appear silver, and to make glue that will not come loose in fire or water. Then there are a few more household, fishing and agricultural recipes for things such as making boras (a mineral used in medical preparations but also to solder metals), removing stains from clothing, attracting fish to one's hand, catching geese, and writing on metal. Amongst these there is also a mysterious recipe, simply entitled 'a marwyll' ('marvel'), which involves casting the blood of a duck into an oil lamp.[89] The recipes, then, work through a mix of mechanical

[89] The miscellaneous recipes occur in BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, pp. 39–47. Blank leaves occur on pp. 38, 48.

illusion and ambiguously occult processes; texts promising seemingly mundane results are also mixed in amongst those promising more spectacular outcomes.

In MS Ashmole 1389, the miscellaneous recipes are separated from the bulk of the medical remedies by two blank leaves, but in other manuscripts they are intermingled with them.[90] Consider the late fifteenth or early sixteenth-century codex now often known as the *Tollemache Book of Secrets:* alongside marvellous recipes for feats such as carrying fire with bare hands, growing parsley in two hours and becoming invisible, the collection also contains medical recipes to stop bleeding, remove warts, to stay free from cuts, to know if a woman is pregnant with a boy or a girl, and to make hair grow.[91] So, although 'books of secrets' (collections of experiments, tricks and illusions) were a genre in their own right in the Middle Ages, they also became part of the patchwork texture of remedy books.[92]

Like the text on the miscellaneous virtues of vervain, these texts cross boundaries of all kinds: headless men and seemingly dead hens cross and re-cross the borderline between life and death; recipes to make copper seem silver change the appearance of one substance into that of another; instructions for making eggs leap out of a pan render the inanimate animate. The recipes also map a back-and-forth movement across the boundary between change and inertia: they promise to make a transformation and yet they simultaneously acknowledge that the change will only be an illusion. The recipes below from MS Ashmole 1389 demonstrate this:

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[90]E.g. BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 23 and BL, MS Sloane 1315, ff. 88r–149r.
[91]*The Tollemache Book of Secrets,* ed. by Jeremy Griffiths and A.S.G. Edwards (London: Roxburghe Club, 2001), pp. 46–52.
[92] On the tradition behind books of secrets see Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature,* pp. 15–90.

> For to make men to davnce
> Take a pype of ellertre and pyke awaye the pythe and put ther in a <here> here of a ded body and stoppe þe iude with virgyn wax and ley it owur þe dore ther as þou wyllt men to davnce
> [...]
>
> For to seme þat a manes hed ys of
> Take brymstone and put it in a lampe with fyre and let it hang were as men cum in and they shall seme þat ther heddes be of þat be within
>
> For to make all men in a howse to havee too heddes
> Take a quantyte of azure and as moche of quickesiluer and as moche of sulphur ^brymston^ and put these iij together in a brynnyng lampe and euery man shall seme þat he hathe too heddes[93]

While the first recipe promises to bring about real change through ambiguous occult means, the last two recipes openly acknowledge that they are delusions: it will only 'seme' as though the transformation has occurred. This crucial verb compels readers to qualify the idea of recipe collections as purely practical compositions because it makes clear that the recipes do not actually 'get anything done'; they entertain and amuse by virtue of the fact that they only appear to have done so. Recipes such as these are therefore another potential source of carnivalesque energy within the collections, not only undermining the practical bent of a collection but also making light of taboos and socially censured practises such as nudity or excessive dancing. This capacity to turn accepted codes of behaviour topsy-turvy is heightened by the fact that the actions the recipes map out are all imagined in tightly bounded, interior spaces: the tricks are played upon those who are 'within', are inside 'a howse', or have passed through a 'dore'. Such explicit demarcation of domestic space does not usually occur in medical

[93] BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, pp. 39–40. Individually and in other combinations, these recipes occur in other manuscripts too. E.g., see BL, MS Sloane 1315, f. 115r; BodL, MS Radcliffe Trust e.10, f. 61v and BodL, MS e. Museao 52, f. 61v.

recipes; it recalls the unusual example of the skeleton in the 'þe chyrche ȝerde'. It also recalls the domestic setting of many fabliaux: Chaucer's *Miller's Tale* and *The Reeve's Tale* mainly take place in houses and bedrooms and crucial events, such as Absolon's misdirected kiss at Alison's window, occur at the thresholds of these domestic spaces.[94] A similar use of space characterises *Jack and his Stepdame,* a fifteenth-century tale in which the eponymous Jack is given a magical pipe that will make everybody dance. The climax of this tale, which seems to have been part of the same imaginative network as the above recipe for making everybody dance, is marked by the movement of the pipe and the mischief it unleashes towards the hall, or 'howse', of Jack's father.[95] These bounded, ordered and hierarchal domestic settings make the overturning of order more palpable. In both the recipes and the fabliaux*,* then, the violation of social, sexual and conceptual thresholds is mapped onto the imagined violation of physical ones.

In her study of several similar miscellaneous collections, Laura Mitchell claims that 'there is no discernible pattern to the order in which things appear', adding that this 'unorganised order [...] makes [the scribe's] alternative interests available to the reader almost simultaneously'.[96] While it is certainly true that many miscellaneous recipes may have been copied together because the owner of the manuscript wished to have all of his or her recipes in one conveniently accessible book, there does sometimes seem to be more thought behind the arrangement. In collections such as MS Ashmole 1389 and *The Tollemache Book of Secrets*, overtly marvellous or playful recipes – such as making men seem headless or making men breathe fire – are copied amongst medical and household recipes that, if copied individually, would appear mundane, unexciting and utilitarian:

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[94] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Miller's Tale*, in *Riverside*, line 3727.
[95] *Jack and His Stepdame,* in Furrow, ed., *Ten Fifteenth-Century Comic Poems,* pp. 124–31, lines 319–384.
[96] Mitchell, 'Cultural Uses of Magic', pp. 162–63.

these include removing a stain from clothing, catching fish, staunching blood, and making hair grow.[97] The last two recipes often appear in unremarkable head-to-toe medical compendia.[98] When these mundane recipes are copied alongside the other marvels, however, their marvellous, transformative qualities are also drawn out: just as herbs such as vervain could shift unpredictably from recipe to recipe between signifying the marvellous and the mundane, these texts metamorphosise in relation to one another, shifting between the wondrous and the quotidian. The capacity to make hair grow, warts disappear, and blood stop flowing suddenly seems more wondrous when it is equated with making parsley grow in two hours. Just like the tricks and illusions surrounding them, these medical recipes bring about a physically demonstratable result which can be performed before and used to impress spectators in a way that the curing of a headache and other internal ailments cannot. It seems possible then that, at least at one stage in their transmission, a scribe chose to place these texts alongside one another because he recognised this similarity and potential for semantic interplay.

Recipes also move each other across the boundary between the licit and the illicit and the serious and the funny. This occurs in a passage on the virtues of lily in the Middle English verse herbal discussed in previous chapters. It is claimed that if a lily-based mixture is placed in a dunghill, it will produce worms. Those worms should then be powdered. The following uses can be made of the powder:

> And cast it on clothys þat folk han on
> ȝey schull noȝt slepyn be dayes iij
> Whil þe clothis on hem be
> [...]

[97] On BodL, MS Ashmole 1393, f. 1v–2v, similar recipes for making hair fall away and for catching rabbits are copied amongst obvious marvels. The same kinds of texts appear, then, to have been incorporated into these marvel networks, perhaps suggesting that the combinations became conventional.
[98] E.g., YM, MS XVI. E. 32, ff. 17r–v, 58r–59r.

> 3if þou take netys mylk also
> And þis powdir þou medyl þ*er*to
> And who þ*er* of etyn schall
> In to afeu*er* schal he falle[99]

The itching powder initially seems like a playful practical joke. But because the recipe immediately after it is for inducing a fever, it retrospectively appears more sinister. Once again, the transgressive aspects of one recipe draw out those in another. There are several other recipes in the herbal which could also be used to torture or control others: these include bringing about discord between a husband and wife, depriving someone of sleep until the herb dragonwort is removed from under his or her head, and making everyone appear like devils.[100] In the longest surviving versions of the herbal, though, there is a pronounced sense of balance: although instructions are given for bringing about injury and harm, there are also remedies for these afflictions. There are numerous remedies for fevers, instructions for protecting oneself against the devil, and a recipe for bringing about unity between a husband and wife.[101] This suggests another kind of thoughtful arrangement: the author may have enshrined within the poem a reassuring sense of equilibrium. But it is significant that, for a reader progressing linearly through the herbal, this equilibrium is experienced as a playful dynamic between transgression and atonement: balance may ultimately be restored but the push and pull – the crossing and re-crossing of boundaries – has to take place first.

These dynamic patterns in the verse herbals and miscellaneous recipe collections indicate that some compilers may have built into their collections a simple

[99] Stephens, ed., *Extracts in Prose and Verse,* p. 380, lines 994–1002.
[100] Stephens, ed., *Extracts in Prose and Verse,* lines 810–14, 1136–38, 943–44.
[101] Stephens, ed., *Extracts in Prose and Verse,* lines 472, 594, 694–96, 716, 721, 729, 758–59, 803–4, 871–76, 1062, 1100, 1238, 1261, 1412–15.

but effective kind of perspectival play. In his seminal study of play, *Homo Ludens*, Johan Huizinga claims that play has an 'aesthetic' quality and is described by 'terms with which we try to describe the effects of beauty: tension, poise, balance, contrast, variation, solution, resolution etc.[102] The contrasts, tensions, and resolutions in the recipe collections and herbals may be simple and the combinations of recipes – copied from manuscript to manuscript – may have become formulaic, but they still have the potential to produce satisfying aesthetic effects.

Huizinga claims, though, that play is formed through rules, boundaries, and the demarcation of a 'playground'.[103] In the recipe collections it can be hard to discern these: the verse herbal provides means of undoing and making right a harm but it does not prescribe or even advocate this course of action. In other collections, though, boundaries are more discernible. For instance, in MS Ashmole 1389, the separation of the marvellous recipes from the surrounding medical ones by two blank leaves implies that the compiler wished to demarcate his 'playground'.[104] Moreover, it is significant that some recipes seem to have been excluded from the metamorphic networks. For instance, though anaesthetic for animals is often incorporated into networks of mundane and marvellous recipes, recipes for human anaesthetic are not. The recipes for animal anaesthetic are usually phrased in playful terms that make it ambiguous whether the recipe is actually for a veterinary purpose or whether it is a practical joke or illusion. In one miscellaneous collection, the recipe is entitled: 'For to make a hors be he neuer so lofty in the stabell for to fall sodenly don and seme that he chall dy'.[105] It is clear that

[102] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*: *A Study of the Play Element in Culture,* trans. by R.F.C. Hull (London: Routledge, 1949), p. 10.
[103] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens,* p. 10.
[104] BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, pp. 38, 48.
[105] BodL, MS Ashmole 1393, f. 3v.

the author of this recipe, and the many others like it, wished to make the mundane marvellous and dramatic.[106] In contrast, I have only found two recipes for making humans appear dead and neither of these are for anaesthetic: one is clearly an optical illusion.[107] The other, from the verse herbal, uses agrimony to make an individual sleep soundly:

> 3if it be leyd vndir ma*n*nys heed
> He schal slepyn as he were deed.[108]

Unlike deadly nightshade, opium, mandrake or henbane, which are all frequently used in medieval equivalents of anaesthetic, agrimony does not have narcotic, soporific or sedative qualities, so its effect here seems to depend on occult powers.[109] Perhaps genuine anaesthetic remedies were excluded from collections of marvels because the effects were not considered a laughing matter or an entertaining spectacle: the warnings issued in late medieval surgical writings suggest that doses of these toxic substances frequently brought about more than the mere appearance of death.[110]

In remedy books, then, boundaries can appear, or fail to appear, in unexpected places: it is apparently unacceptable to make a joke out of the effects of anaesthetic on humans but it is acceptable to steal – or imagine stealing – human remains from a churchyard. It can be hard for a modern reader to orientate him or herself in relation to

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[106] For similar recipes see BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, p. 39; HEHL, MS 1336, f. 27v; BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 8.
[107] See NLW, MS Peniarth 402, p. 251.
[108] Stephens, ed., *Extracts in Prose and Verse*, p. 388, lines 1271–72.
[109] On medieval narcotics, see Robert P. Hudson and Linda E. Voigts, 'A drynke þat men callen dwale to make a man to slepe whyle men kerven him: A Surgical Anaesthetic from Late Medieval England', in *Health, Disease and Healing in Medieval Culture*, ed. by Sheila Campbell and others (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 34–56.
[110] This is ironic given that the Middle English word for a narcotic drink, *dwale,* means trickery: see *MED, dwale,* n., entry 1(a). Perhaps this inspired the animal recipes. On the perceived dangers of narcotics, see Hudson and Voigts, 'A drynke', pp. 34, 46.

such unexpected occurrences. This difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that we are usually forced to speculate from omissions or silences where the boundaries were placed. It is this very silence, however, which means that the things and actions recorded in recipes can produce multiple associations and responses simultaneously. So, although we often cannot be sure how individual readers responded to the collections, we can remain sensitive to the great range of reactions and interpretations available to them. Furthermore, it is possible that the recipes did not evoke stable, singular responses at all, but shifting, metamorphic ones which changed when the contents of the recipes were viewed from the alternative vantage points constructed by other remedies within the collection. Unlike rigid clerical denunciations of particular healing actions, the collections may, then, offer a more accurate reflection of the constant negotiations and re-negotiations medieval people made in the face of ambiguous boundaries and ambivalent attitudes to practices associated with sorcery. Indeed, the compilatory form *encourages* such negotiations, stimulating the interpretive and imaginative faculties. It again becomes clear how a seemingly practical and convenient form could produce unexpected, unpredictable, and varied cognitive responses.

Parody, Pastiche and Play

Discussion in the previous two chapters about the relationship between perspective, textual organisation, and conceptual boundaries has touched upon how aspects of the remedies' style and content might tip into appearing far-fetched or ridiculous. This final chapter will investigate that latter boundary in more detail: what role do bathos, comedy, and absurdity play in recipes and contemporary responses to them? How does this affect or nuance our conception of the texts' 'practicality'? One obvious source of responses to recipes' potential to appear impractical, far-fetched or absurd are a group of literary writings which have been described by modern critics as parodies of remedies.[1]

In her study of medieval rewritings of scriptural, hagiographical and devotional texts, Martha Bayless uses the anachronistic but useful term *textual parody* to describe 'an intentionally humorous literary (written) text that achieves its effect by [...] imitating and distorting the distinguishing characteristics of literary genres, styles, authors or specific texts'.[2] As Bayless's study of scriptural and hagiographical parodies in Latin shows, parodic texts in medieval culture were not always critical or mocking; they could be light-hearted, comic and celebratory.[3] Texts commonly considered parodies of

[1] These linguistic parodies have received far less attention than texts satirising medical practice. On the latter see Linda E. Voigts, 'Herbs and Herbal Healing Satirized in Middle English Texts', in *Herbs and Healers from the Ancient Mediterranean through the Medieval West: Essays in Honor of J M. Riddle*, ed. by Anne Van Arsdall and Timothy Graham (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 217–30; Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire: The Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 91–99; Alaya Swann,'"By Expresse Experiment": The Doubting Midwife Salome in Late Medieval England', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine,* 89 (2015), 1–24.
[2] Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 3.
[3] Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages,* pp. 6–7. Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 16, argues that this is true of modern parody too.

medical recipes include the Scottish poet Robert Henryson's fifteenth-century verse collection of remedies, 'Sum Practysis of Medecyne' and an inverted remedy for blindness that occurs in a late fifteenth-century compendium of carols and other kinds of verse.[4] Parts of other late medieval texts, such as *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, also seem to parody medical jargon.[5] These exaggerations and distortions of medical discourses have parallels in European poetry and drama as well.[6]

So, what defines these texts as parodies? The category of parody is entirely dependent upon a readership familiar with the style or form being parodied. The reader has to recognise not only that certain stylistic features are being imitated but also that they have been exaggerated. In certain discourses, such as medieval love-lyrics, this can be difficult because the style of the source is already hyperbolic. Hence, several studies have debated whether a particular amatory lyric was written with serious or parodic intent.[7] In the case of medical parodies, things seem simpler. Analysing 'Sum Practysis of Medecyne' and the remedy for blindness alongside other European texts, I shall suggest that two recurring features of medical parody are the repeated inclusion of impossible-to-attain ingredients (*impossibilia*) and advice intended to harm rather than heal, which turns the texts into inverted remedies. The first feature is an exaggerated form of the highly specific ingredients in some genuine recipes. These exaggerations give insight into those features of recipes which medieval readers felt had the potential, when amplified,

[4] BodL, MS Eng Poet e.1, f. 21v.
[5] This is also true of a nonsensical letter transcribed and discussed in Nancy Pope, 'A Middle English Satirical Letter in Brogyntyn MS II.1', *American Notes and Queries,* 18 (2005), 38–42.
[6] Denton Fox, 'Henryson's "Sum Practysis"', *Studies in Philology,* 69 (1972), 453–60, gives an overview of the parodic corpus.
[7] E.g., T.L Burton, '"The Fair Maid of Ribblesdale" and the Problem of Parody', *Essays in Criticism,* 4 (1981), 282–98; Theo Stemmler, 'Chaucer's Ballade "To Rosemounde" – A Parody?', in *Literature and Religion in the Later Middle Ages: Philological Studies in Honour of Siegfried Wenzel,* ed. by Richard G. Newhauser (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1995), pp. 11–23.

to appear absurd. I use this word, a descendent of the medieval Latin word *absurditas,* to denote the unreasonable, incongruous, and amusingly ridiculous.[8]

Parodic remedies, then, are *consistently* crafted exaggerations or inversions. Because of this careful stylistic consistency, they often resemble literary writings more than the ostensibly utilitarian writings they imitate. This stylistic distinction might explain why studies of parodic remedies rarely discuss their language in close or sustained conversation with that of their serious counterparts.[9] An exception, discussed in more depth later, is Julie Orlemanski's comparison of the jargon used in serious recipes with that used in Henryson's mock remedies.[10] As Orlemanski suggests, the boundary between the serious and the parodic is not always as clear-cut as it appears.

This chapter will develop our understanding of these blurred boundaries by demonstrating that, though parodies of recipes distinguish themselves from serious recipes by being impossible, inverted or consistently (and not sporadically) exaggerated, some serious recipes contain moments where they move closer to their parodic counterparts, edging towards the absurd. It is often impossible to know whether such *reductio ad absurdum* was part of an intentional playfulness and whether it was considered playful or parodic by readers. Though some evidence suggests writers and readers may have been conscious of it, other evidence implies that not all readers 'got the joke'. As has been apparent throughout this thesis, separating the different layers of response – authors', scribes' and readers' – can be very difficult because the recipes are all pastiches: excerpted and translated from learned Latin texts and copied and recopied

[8] *OED, absurd,* adj., entries 1(a), 2, 3; *DMLBS, absurditas,* n., entries (a), (b). See also *MED, absurditie*, n. entries (a), (b), which similarly define the term as 'lack of harmony' or 'unjust practice'. However, the *MED* only lists two examples and the earliest of these usages is dated to 1500.
[9] E.g., Fox, 'Henryson's "Sum Practysis", 453–60; Pope, 'A Middle English Satirical Letter', 38–42.
[10] Orlemanski, 'Jargon and the Matter of Medicine', 395–420.

in new compilations, they are *all* distorted echoes of each other and other medical writings. It is, however, this dynamic circulation that provides the few clues we do have to which aspects of the recipes readers considered silly or ridiculous: if a detail is present in one version of the text, but absent in another, it may have been deliberately removed or added. Examining these sporadic clues to reader responses in ordinary remedy books alongside the responses to remedies recorded in explicitly parodic texts will not only allow us to speculate about which aspects of recipes were considered absurd, silly or comic, but will also allow us to explore the creative thinking involved in producing and comprehending such absurdities.

Robert Henryson's 'Sum Practysis of Medecyne'

One response to absurdity is a late fifteenth-century alliterative poem by the Scottish poet Robert Henryson (d. c. 1490). In this work, an outraged narrator addresses four mock prescriptions to a quack physician who has defamed the narrator by wrongly declaring him 'dottit' or crazed. The poem begins:

> Guk guk, gud day, schir: gaip quhill ȝe get it.
> Sic greting may gane weill; gud laik in ȝour hude.
> ȝe wald deir me I trow, becaus I am dottit,
> To ruffill me with a ryme – na, schir, be the rude.
> ȝour saying I haif sene and on syd set it,
> As geir of all gaddering, glaikit nocht gude;
> Als ȝour medicyne by mesour I haif meit met it,
> The quhilk I stand ford ȝe nocht vnderstude,
> Bot wrett on as ȝe culd to gar folk wene
> For feir my longis wes flaft,
> Or I wes dottit or daft:
> Gife I can ocht of þe craft,
> Heir be it sene.[11]

[11] Henryson, 'Sum Practysis of Medecyne', in *RH*, lines 1–13. Future references are within the text.

[*deir* = scorn; *dottit* = crazed; *geir of all gaddering* = borrowed stuff; *meit met* = properly measured; *gar* = made*; flaft* = unsteady or fluttering

In this stanza and the one succeeding it, the narrator attacks the physician's lack of medical expertise, describing his knowledge as 'clowtit and clampit' ('patched together', 15) and as 'geir of all gaddering' ('borrowed matter', 6). The narrator implies that his addressee's medical knowledge is nothing more than an embarrassing pastiche of other people's words used by the addressee to conceal his own lack of knowledge or skill. As suggested in Chapter One, the narrator's claim that the addressee 'wrett on' in this way creates a possible connection between this patchwork knowledge and the accumulative form of recipe collections.

In the next four stanzas of the poem, Henryson cements this formal connection to remedy books by offering his addressee prescriptions for a variety of ailments, from the inoffensive cough to the more demeaning diarrhoea. The remedy for the latter affliction is quoted below:

Dia Culcakit
Cape cuk maid, and crop the colleraige,
Ane medecyne for the maw and ȝe cowth mak it
With sueit satlingis and sowrokis, þe sop of the sege,
The crud of my culome, with ȝour teith crakit,
Lawrean and linget seid, and the luffage,
The hair of the hurcheoun nocht half deill hakkit,
With þe snowt of ane selch, ane swelling to swage:
This cure is callit in our craft *dia culcakkit*.
Put all thir in ane pan with pepper and pik.
Syne sett in to this,
The count of ane sow kis;
Is nocht bettir, I wis,
For þe collik. (26–39)

> [*cukmaid* = fresh dung; *colleraige* = pepper; *maw* = stomach; *satlingis* = dregs; *sowrokis* = sorrel; *linget* = flax; *hurcheon* = hedgehog; *selch* = seal]

Henryson's prescriptions contain herbs and spices familiar from serious remedies, such as sage (29), laurel (31), lovage (31), and black pepper (68). But many of the grotesque ingredients in the mock cures also have precise parallels in genuine remedies: for example, the 'harnis of ane haddok, hakkit or haill' ('the brains of a haddock, chopped or whole', 57) are paralleled in a remedy for broken bones which calls for the 'brayne of a sowkyng whelpe' ('the brain of a nursing puppy').[12] Similarly, 'the bellox of ane brok' ('the testicles of a badger', 75) are paralleled in many remedies requiring animal testicles, such as a Latin recipe to make men and women conceive which contains the testicles of an old cock ('testiculos veteris Galli').[13]

The corporeality of genuine remedies is, however, exaggerated in Henryson's mock-remedies, as one cure calls for the narrator's faeces crushed with the addressee's teeth: 'the crud of my culome, with ȝour teith crakit' (30). Human faeces do not normally appear in remedy books. Human urine does but it is usually the patient's own that is required. Only occasionally do recipes require patients to consume the urine of the practitioner treating them.[14] When it does occur, this instruction creates a potential power dynamic, drawing a clear distinction between the patient's sickening body and the practitioner's healthy and healing one. Henryson reverses this dynamic to place the practitioner in the position of the patient; this suits the mocking tone of the narrator's

[12] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part II, p. 103.
[13] BL, MS Sloane 1315, f. 92v. Fox, 'Henryson's "Sum Practysis"', p. 458, demonstrates that some of the other ingredients also have looser parallels with ingredients in real remedies.
[14] E.g., BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part II, p. 135 where a fifteenth-century remedy for worms in the body instructs the reader to 'temper [rue] wit þyn vreyne and gyf þe syke to drynke'.

invective, as it bathetically reframes the addressee as a body as vulnerable and undesirable as those he treats. It also draws attention to the corporeal nature of the physician's work diagnosing sicknesses by looking at or tasting urine and probing faeces. The same use of bathos appears in Francesco Petrarch's *Invective contra medicum (Invectives against the Physician),* four polemical letters which the fourteenth-century poet addressed to an unnamed physician for his incompetent and crooked treatment of Pope Clement VI. In one of these invectives, Petrarch writes: 'Ab obiectis inquam stercoribus et colorem et odorem traxeris et saporem' ('I say that your colour, taste and smell come from the stuff to which you are exposed – shit').[15]

Transforming animal excrement into human excrement is not the only way in which Henryson uses exaggeration to distinguish his remedies from their genuine counterparts: he also includes overtly difficult or impossible-to-attain ingredients. Some of these seem difficult to attain because they are not the parts of an animal that one would normally use or buy, such as 'the snowt of ane selch' ('the snout of a seal', 33).[16] They are often also of a very specific type and must be picked and prepared in a particular way: for example, Henryson's cures include 'the hair of the hurcheoun nocht half deill hakkit' (the hair of the hedgehog not cut in half, 32) and 'thre ruggis of the reid ruke' ('three pulls (i.e. feathers) from the red rook', 40). This specificity is not, however, actually that different from the commands one finds in genuine remedies: as Gerhard Eis

[15] Text and translation from Marsh, ed. and trans., *Invectives,* pp. 80–81. On the context and language of the *Invectives*, see Nancy Struever, 'Petrarch's *Invective contra medicum*: An Early Confrontation of Rhetoric and Medicine', *Modern Language Notes,* 108 (1993), 659–79; Conrad H. Rawski, 'Notes on the Rhetoric in Petrarch's *Invective contra medicum'*, in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later: A Symposium*, ed. by Aldo Scaglione (Chicago: University of North Carolina, 1975), pp. 249–77; Stefano Cracolici, 'The Art of Invective', in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. by Victoria Kirkham and Armando Maggi (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009), pp. 255–73.

[16] Fox, 'Henryson's "Sum Practysis"', p. 458, notes that seals were sometimes used to treat colic but normally their skins were used.

notes, these often call for very particular ingredients without any explanation.[17] Examples from real remedies include a remedy for poor hearing that instructs the reader to 'tak þe wolle of a blak schep vnder þe wombe pulled' ('wool pulled from under the stomach of a black sheep'); a cure for gout that requires 'þe mary of the ryȝt leg of an horse' ('the marrow of the right leg of a horse') and a cure for torn tendons which requires 'grete wormes of þe erthe whyles þey engendreþ' ('large earth worms whilst they copulate').[18] Although modern science has suggested that some of these ingredients, such as earthworms, have healing properties, it is not clear why these properties would be heightened by selecting *mating* worms.[19] Such specificity could be testament to the careful recording of empirical practice; the ingredients used must be described exactly if the cure is to work again. But this specificity could also be considered a stylistic tick functioning as rhetoric: the particularity is a possible attempt to convince a reader that, behind the selection of ingredients, lies a specialist expertise which can only be understood by those who are also 'in the know'.

This rhetoric could have had a positive effect upon sick readers, bringing about mental and physical relief by convincing patients that the expertly selected ingredients would do them some good. 'Sum Practysis', however, offers a more negative reading, exposing the dangers of such specificity: if Henryson's remedies are understood as parodies of the cures prescribed by his addressee, a *quack* physician, then they suggest that specific language is one of the tools of deception used by such charlatans to make

[17] Eis, *Mittelalterliche Fachliteratur,* p. 57.
[18] Respectively, BL, MS Sloane 468, f. 8v; BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part II, p. 15; HEHL, MS HM 19079, f. 9v.
[19] Yung-Ming Chang and others, 'Earthworms: A Potential Target for TCM (CAM) Research', in *Biology of Earthworms*, ed. by Ayten Karaca (Berlin: Springer, 2011), pp. 247–60 (p. 251), cites uses of earthworms to heal wounds in mouse skin. The author of the remedy for torn tendons might, however, have chosen earthworms because they can regrow lost body parts; a sympathetic cure may be intended.

themselves appear knowledgeable. Indeed, Henryson makes clear that some of the specific ingredients within his cures have no real healing potential. For instance, the mock cures require 'the gant of ane gray meir' ('the yawn of a grey mare', 41) and 'the claik of ane gus' ('the cluck of a goose', 41). The specificity of the first description – the horse must be a grey female – makes a reader feel for a moment as if these intangible ingredients could become tangible; categories are collided in impossible ways. So, whilst other hyper-specific ingredients within the mock-cures, such as 'ane vnce of ane oster poik at þe nethir parte' ('an ounce of an oyster's stomach at the lower part', 71), are not that different from serious recipe discourse, these impossible sonic ingredients are unequivocally exaggerated and parodic.

Similar constructions appear in other late medieval texts and suggest a European-wide style of parodying the language and content of remedies. For instance, a late medieval 'medesyne' for regaining virginity calls for impossible sonic ingredients such as the 'sownd of a belle' and the 'krekynge of a cart-whele'.[20] Similarly, an assistant to a quack apothecary or physician intrudes upon the action of a fourteenth-century Innsbruck Easter play about Christ's resurrection to proclaim that his master's remedies contain 'der groβen glocken klangk' ('the great chime of a clock'), 'waz der kucket hure gesanck' ('what the cuckoo sang today') and 'daz getummele von eyner brucken' ('the hurly-burly of a bridge').[21] The assistant also claims that the preparations are made from 'daz blut von eynem schlegele' ('the blood from a mallet', 832) and 'daz geherne von

[20] *Reliquiae antiquae: Scraps from Ancient Manuscripts, Illustrating Chiefly English Literature and the English Language*, ed. by Thomas Wright and James Orchard Halliwell, 2 vols (London: Smith, 1845), I, 250–51, lines 3, 13, and 30.

[21] *Das Innsbrucker Osterspiel; Das Osterspiel von Muri: Mittlehochdeutsch und Neuhochdeutsch*, ed. and trans. by Rudolf Meier (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1962), lines 834, 835, and 830. Future line references are within the text.

eynem flegele' ('the brain of a threshing flail', 833). These constructions bring into collision the incompatible categories of human and thing, the animate and the inanimate. Similar constructions also appear in French drama and in a thirteenth-century French poem by Rutebeuf, suggesting that this particular style of parodying medical remedies had a long tradition.[22]

What exactly, though, do these impossible ingredients signify in Henryson's parody? They might be interpreted as a criticism of the inefficacy of remedies by quack physicians: the cures are as likely to work as one is to capture the cluck of a goose. Alternatively, the impossible language, functioning as a barrier to comprehension and practice, might be understood to represent the secrecy sometimes associated with medical knowledge.[23] Julie Orlemanski has offered a third interpretation which combines these emphases on secrecy and inefficacy: for Orlemanski the sonic *impossibilia* signify the semantic debasement which afflicts medical language, when it functions as empty jargon because it is not understood or underpinned by any medical expertise. Along with the poem's extensive alliteration, these impossible sonic ingredients suggest to Orlemanski that pleasing sound is the only criterion determining the selection of ingredients and the way in which they are described. As a result, Henryson's remedies – and, it is implied, the genuine jargon-heavy, ultra-specific medical discourse they exaggerate – risk becoming 'meaningless noise'.[24] Supporting Orlemanski's argument is

[22] On French parodic texts containing similar constructions see Fox, 'Henryson's "Sum Practysis"', p. 453–54.
[23] On secrecy and trade knowledge, see Christopher Cannon, 'Chaucer and the Language of London', in *Chaucer and the City*, ed. by Ardis Butterfield (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006), pp. 79–95; Pamela O. Long, *Openness, Secrecy, Authorship: Technical Arts and the Culture of Knowledge from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001); Pamela H. Smith, 'What is a Secret? Secrets and Craft Knowledge in Early Modern Europe', in *Secrets and Knowledge in Medicine and Science, 1500-1800*, ed. by Elaine Leong and Alisha Rankin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 51– 67; William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature,* pp. 15–90.
[24] Orlemanski, 'Jargon and the Matter of Medicine', p. 409.

the fact that medieval nonsense poems often made similar use of *impossibilia*: for example, a short poem known as *The Feast of Tottenham* depicts a banquet formed from bizarre dishes in which humans, often identified by their craft profession, and inedible objects, usually symbols of particular crafts and professions, are turned into foodstuffs: for instance, saddlers are represented by 'saduls in sewys' ('saddles in stews'), whilst physicians are signified through 'jordans in jussell' ('urine flasks in an egg-based dish').[25] This poem can be interpreted as a parody of a type of culinary recipe which taught readers to create people, animals, plants and architectural models out of food for impressive banquet displays.[26] *The Feast of Tottenham*, though, is not explicitly mocking or critical; instead it encourages delight in a carnivalesque, nonsensical poetic style which turns topsy-turvy the laws of nature and culture, as well as any requirement to make sense.

A similar pleasure can be detected in Henryson's parody. Although it gestures towards the deceptions that might be practised through hyper-specific language, the parody also draws attention to the perverse creativity involved in producing such language: one strings together the most peculiarly specific or incongruous ingredients and epithets one can think of to create unusual, absurd or unnatural combinations. The only rule in Henryson's alliterative remedies is that the component ingredients begin with the same letter. Medieval theories of fiction recognised this kind of creativity and attributed it to the imagination: although fiction was distrusted by many on moral grounds, the human ability to create new, hybrid creations out of phantasms stored in

[25] *The Feast of Tottenham*, in *Sentimental and Humorous Romances: 'Floris and Blancheflour'*, '*Sir Degrevant', 'The Squire of Low Degree', 'The Tournement of Tottenham', and 'The Feast of Tottenham',* ed. by Erik Kooper (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), lines 22, 37.
[26] Wall, *Recipes for Thought,* pp. 77–80.

the memory was widely acknowledged. As Chaucer's fourteenth-century translation of Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae* explains:

> Ymaginacioun, albeit so that it takith of wit the bygynnynges to seen and to formen the figures, algates althoughe that wit ne were nat present, yit it envyrowneth and comprehendith alle thingis sensible.[27]

Imagination allows images originally produced by sense impressions to be reproduced when those sense stimuli are no longer there. It also allows humans to combine or 'formen' those images into new ones.[28] This theory of the imagination was inherited from the writings of Aristotle, Augustine, Boethius, and Avicenna and continually reaffirmed by later medieval writers.[29] The twelfth-century Scottish philosopher Richard of St. Victor offered the following example to explain the formative powers of the imagination: despite having never seen a house of gold, humans can imagine one by mentally reproducing the image of a house and combining it with an image of gold. [30] It is through this faculty that we are able to imagine chimeras or impossible hybrid creatures such as white crows: the white crow is used in Aristotle's *Categories* and Porphyry's *Isagoge*, an introduction to Aristotle's text, to explain how to classify the different properties and attributes of things.[31] The blackness of the crow is categorised as an *inseparable accident*: these attributes define the thing they are attached to by always

[27] Geoffrey Chaucer, *Boece,* in *Riverside,* Bk V, pr.5, lines 203–207.
[28] Fradenburg, 'Imagination', pp. 15–16.
[29] Palmén, *Richard of St. Victor's Theory of Imagination*, pp. 20, 22–23, 26–28, 33, 38, 41.
[30] Palmén, *Richard of St. Victor's Theory of Imagination,* p. 97. Avicenna offers similar examples of a flying man or emerald mountain: see Kemal, *Philosophical Poetics*, p. 151.
[31] The content of these texts was available to the later Middle Ages through Boethius's Latin translations. See James Shiel, 'Boethius' Commentaries on Aristotle', in *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and their Influence*, ed. by Richard Sorabji, 2nd edn (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 377–402 (p. 377).

being present, but are not considered integral to that thing's nature.[32] Consequently, one can imagine a white crow. Indeed, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, it is imagined that the raven, a similar bird to the crow, was originally white but was turned black by Phoebus for telling the god that his lover had been unfaithful; the tale is retold in Chaucer's *Manciple's Tale*.[33] Miscellaneous trick recipes in remedy collections also tell the reader how 'to make wyte crowes' by coating ravens' eggs in sticky honey and filling the nest with white wool.[34] In medieval culture, the white crow clearly stood as a symbol of imaginable impossibility.

The hyper-specific and impossible ingredients in Henryson's mock remedies and their genuine counterparts could, then, be both the products of – and stimulants for – creative thought: a reader has to combine images in their minds in new ways in order to envisage the correct ingredient. Sometimes this is easy: even if one has not recently seen a black sheep, one can combine stored images of blackness, sheep, and wool to imagine taking wool from one. But imagining the marrow inside of a horse's leg is a little harder. Henryson's parodies challenge the reader further. One calls for the gall bladder of a green dove (43): these birds, known as emerald doves, do exist but because they are native to Asia, it is unlikely that many of Henryson's readers would have seen one. As well as re-imagining the colour of a bird known in medieval Europe for its whiteness, readers would also have the tricky feat of imagining what the bird's gallbladder might look like. Equally difficult to imagine is the lower part of an oyster's stomach (71).

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[32] Ian Maclean, 'White Crows, Graying Hair, and Eyelashes: Problems for Natural Historians in the Reception of Aristotelian Logic and Biology from Pomponazzi to Bacon', in *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Siraisi (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), pp. 147–80 (p. 150).

[33] Justus Miller, ed. and trans., *Metamorphoses*, I, Bk II, line 632.

[34] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 8 (where the recipe is only listed in the contents page). For the full recipe see HEHL, MS HM 1336, ff. 27v–28r.

Henryson's mock remedies can be read, then, as literary critical responses to remedies which draw explicit attention to something that this thesis has otherwise inferred from *im*plicit evidence: the parodic cures suggest that the writing of empirical cures could be connected – through fundamental cognitive processes – to the composition of more explicitly imaginative and fantastical writings.[35]

Ultimately, though, such creativity is shown to be misplaced: as suggested above, the mock remedies parody a *bad* type of cure in which imaginatively but arbitrarily selected ingredients conceal a lack of medical expertise. Appropriateness and decorum were, as Chapter Two showed, important parts of medieval theories of artful writing. Fittingly, in Horace's *Ars poetica*, a touchstone for medieval poetic handbooks, the importance of stylistic consistency is communicated through the image of another impossible hybrid: for Horace, a work lacking stylistic unity is like a painting depicting a monster formed from parts of human, horse, bird, and fish.[36] Henryson's impossible hybrid creations perhaps offer a similar critique of the inappropriate mixing of modes and styles, of the imaginative and the practical, which empirical recipes can bring about. This is the polemical point made in the *Invective contra medicum*, where Petrarch criticises the physician's use of rhetoric, and the improper mixing of mechanical and liberal arts that this involves, through a string of hybrid creations: 'Tam decet ornatus medicum, quam asellum falere [...] Quisquis te disertum dixerit, idem et nitidam suem, et volucrem testudinem at candidum corvum dicat' ('Ornate speech suits a doctor just as a caparison suits a donkey [...] If someone calls you eloquent, let him also call the hog

[35] The hybrid creatures also parallel the marvels and monsters depicted in medieval travel writing and maps, text-types which, like recipes, often claim to communicate truths: see Asa Simon Mittman, *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 11–59.
[36] Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica,* trans. by H.R. Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 450–51.

elegant, the turtle winged and the crow snow-white', pp. 136–37). So, both Henryson and Petrarch recognise the playful, imaginative and artful aspects of medical discourse, but they consider them as out of place as a white crow or a green dove.

Sensing the Absurd

Because Henryson's remedies collide incompatible categories and discursive styles, exceed the limitations of nature and reason, and produce laughter and outrage by seeming so unattainable or impractical, they can aptly be described as absurd. One would expect to find such absurdities in parodies, whether those parodies were light-hearted or, like Henryson's, had a more critical edge. But one would not expect to find them, at least in such a pronounced form, in apparently serious recipes. Occasionally, though, the boundary between serious and parodic discourse threatens to blur. This blurring is illustrated by a fifteenth-century collection of medical and miscellaneous recipes. After a series of charms for curing fevers and healing wounds, a recipe for a practical joke is copied; it instructs the reader on how to make a room seem as though it has been flooded (see Figure 4 in the appendix). Although it is too long to reproduce in full, this recipe is notable for its use of hyper-specific language: not only does it require 'snakyys egges' of the 'whittest' kind to be laid 'on a blacke grownde iij dayes and iij ny3ghites' and then broken into 'a newe asshen coppe', but it also instructs the reader to 'take a threde of iiij fathom or fyve þat a mayde hathe sponne on a frydaye byfore

noone'.[37] The last ingredient seems even more outrageously specific than Henryson's ingredients.[38]

The trick involves soaking the string in the egg mixture and hanging it up high so that it does not touch the ground. A dish of salt water should be placed underneath the string and then it shall appear as though the room is flooded. The trick seems to be a mixture of optical illusion, ritual, and natural magic: the crude mechanics of suspending a thread in water are supplemented by unexplained details about the colour of the eggs and ground and the duration for which they are to be left. A Latin recipe for the same trick appears in another manuscript.[39] Some of the instructions are different: for instance, the egg is to be laid with garlic and euphrasy at a crossroads for three days and three nights rather than upon black ground and the thread is to be placed around the doorpost rather than hung up.[40] Nevertheless, the idea of a thread in an egg-based mixture is the same. In the Latin text, though, the thread is simply referred to as 'filum deplicatum' ('a folded-up piece of string'). None of the absurdly specific details found in the longer English text are present. It seems, then, that at some point in the recipe's transmission, a scribe of these or other copies of the text added or removed the details. It may be that the details were considered too outrageously specific to be included; they risk rendering the text ludicrous. But perhaps this was the intention of whoever wrote it: instead of just adding these details to make the recipe sound authoritative, he or she

[37] BL, MS Sloane 1315, f. 90r.
[38] Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 21–22, notes a similar lack of distinction between mock annotations of early modern almanacs and their serious counterparts.
[39] TCC, MS O.1.57, f. 127v, transcribed in Mitchell, 'Cultural Uses of Magic', p. 129: 'Ad faciendum domum apparere plenum aque: accipe ouum alice adyl pone in quadriuio per spacium trium dierum et trium noctum sub terra, et tunc accipe ouum et frange in vase, et tunc accipe filum deplicatum et madefac illum in ouo pone circa postem domus et sic apparebit'.
[40] On the connection between crossroads, criminals and more illicit forms of magic, see Ch. 6, fn. 77.

might have included them as a playful parody of the hyper-specific language in the rest of the recipe, or recipes in general.

If understood by a reader as a parody, this description might alter his or her sense of the collection's practicality: although the parody could just be interpreted as a playful, light-hearted exaggeration of a stylistic tick, it could also function in the same way as Henryson's remedies, drawing attention to recipes' crafted language and suggesting that this crafting concealed a lack of genuine knowledge of the occult properties of substances. But there is no sign that the compiler of the manuscript in which this vernacular flood recipe survives understood the text in this way. The recipe is copied before instructions for producing other tricks and illusions, such as making a loaf of bread dance, and after a series of charms for ailments such as fevers and wounds.[41] It is not demarcated from these charms, many of which require the reader to say aloud specific names and letter combinations or to write them upon particular materials. For example, the charm for fevers which appears immediately before the flood recipe requires one to write names of devotional significance on sage leaves and eat them on particular days of the week.[42] It seems unlikely that the scribe would have intentionally copied a parody of hyper-specific language amongst all these seemingly serious uses of such language. Moreover, there is nothing in the manuscript which demarcates the flood recipe from these charms or suggests that it should be considered any less authoritative. The manuscript makes clear that, for a text to be a parody, it must be continually re-recognised as one by readers.

[41] BL, MS Sloane 1315, ff. 91r–v, 88v–89v.
[42] BL, MS Sloane 1315, f. 89v.

Seeing Stars at Midday

Ingredients are not the only feature of recipes that can appear impossible, absurd, and playful from certain perspectives: a remedy for poor sight in a late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century collection instructs the reader to eat the herb betony and drink laurel oil without any other food, because 'hit schal make þe so cler of syȝtte þat þou schalt se þe sterrys on þe sky wyles þe sonne schyneþ wel al day'.[43] The same impossible promise appears in other late medieval collections, but is there attributed to Hippocrates: 'ipocras says þat þis thyng wyl make a man se þe sterres abowt mydday'.[44] This promise, but not all of the recipes which accompany it, seems to have derived from the eye treatise *De oculis* by the thirteenth-century scholar and pope, Peter of Spain.[45] This text was clearly in circulation in the later Middle Ages because the avid fifteenth-century reader, William Worcester, copies the part of it containing this promise into his medical notebook and attributes it ultimately to Peter.[46] Originally, though, the image may have derived from Aristotle's *On the Generation of Animals* where Aristotle claims that the man who stands in a pit or a well will be able to see further than normal, sometimes even seeing the stars.[47] This wisdom was in part conveyed to later medieval writers through Roger Bacon's section on optics in his *Opus Maior.*[48] Within that text, Bacon also includes an optical illusion that involves taking a basin of water and putting a mirror

[43] BodL, MS Douce 84, f. 7v. See also BodL, MS Ashmole 1413, p. 125.
[44] BodL, MS Ashmole 1444, p. 123. The same promise appears in YM, MS XVI.E.32, f. 21r and again on f. 21v, and LCL, MS 91, ff. 284v, 285r.
[45] See Walter J. Daly and Robert D. Yee, 'The Eye Book of Master Peter of Spain – A Glimpse of Diagnosis and Treatment of Eye Disease in the Middle Ages', *Documenta Ophthalmologica*, 103 (2001), 119–53 (p. 142).
[46] BL, MS Sloane 4, f. 9r.
[47] Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, ed. and trans. by A.L Peck (London: Heinemann, 1942), pp. 502–3. See also David. W. Hughes, 'On Seeing Stars (Especially Up Chimneys)', *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society*, 24 (1983), 246–57.
[48] *The Opus Majus of Roger Bacon,* ed. and trans. by Robert Belle Burke, 2 vols (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1928), II, 502 (where Bacon attributes the knowledge to Pliny) and 517.

in it and then looking in the mirror at the sun.[49] In later books of secrets such as the late thirteenth or early fourteenth-century *Secretum philosophorum* and the late fifteenth or early sixteenth-century *Tollemache Book of Secrets*, this optical illusion was explicitly framed as seeing stars at midday.[50]

The image was not entirely confined to scientific texts: in part of the much earlier *Peterborough Chronicle*, the image is used in a simile for an unnatural marvel that appeared as a portent of Henry I's death in 1135: 'þa [...] uuard þe sunne suilc als it uuare thre niht ald mone, an st*er*res abuten hi*m* at middæi' ('then the sun was as a three-night old moon with the stars about it at midday').[51] This simile shows how the wonderful image could be used figuratively. In the remedy books, it is also used figuratively as a form of hyperbole. This marks a significant change from earlier scientific texts: Aristotle, Roger Bacon, and the author of the *Tollemache Book of Secrets* do not use the image as a rhetorical embellishment; they use it literally to describe real-world, realisable marvels (even if those marvels are, as in the final example, optical illusions). In contrast, hyperbole – which exceeds the limits of the credible – resists literal reading: readers of the above remedies are expected to convert those texts' extravagant claims back into realistic terms to find their literal meaning, concluding that, though the cures could not really make them see the stars at midday, they could give them exceptionally clear sight.

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[49] Burke, ed. and trans., *Opus Majus,* II, 561.
[50] Robert Goulding, 'Deceiving the Senses in the Thirteenth-Century: Trickery and Illusion in the *Secretum Philosophorum'*, in *Magic and the Classical Tradition,* ed. by Charles Burnett and W.F. Ryan (London: Warburg Institute, 2006), pp. 135–62 (p. 150 for Latin and pp. 160–61 for English translation); Griffiths and Edwards, eds, *Tollemache Book of Secrets,* p. 46.
[51] *The Peterborough Chronicle 1070–1154,* ed. by Cecily Clark, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 54, lines 2–4.

Hyperbole was used in all kinds of Middle English writings to represent the extraordinary or extreme. It was a useful means of describing the seemingly indescribable. Hyperbole's use as a poetic and imaginative device was not, however, theorised or reflected upon extensively. For instance, it is only briefly discussed in Bede's *Schematis et tropis sacrae scripturae liber* and Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova*.[52] Extensive discussion of hyperbole as a poetic and rhetorical device does not occur until the sixteenth century, when poetic handbooks began to draw upon earlier, newly-discovered Roman and Greek reflections on the trope.[53] Perhaps the trope was considered too ubiquitous a literary device to deserve extensive commentary. It is clear, though, from late medieval discussions that hyperbole was considered a useful analytical tool: for instance, it was a way of making sense of the seemingly outlandish claims of scripture.[54] Recognising the recipes' guarantees as hyperbole is also integral to interpreting those texts: the recognition allows a reader to circumscribe the healing claims that the recipes are making and, by imposing such limits, it prevents those texts from tipping into the absurd.

Detecting hyperbole is also integral to recognising *parodies* of medical recipes. One would expect this to be the case given that the texts exaggerate stylistic features of serious cures. In this respect, though, it seems difficult for the authors of parodic remedies to exaggerate their source texts. Consider this mock remedy for blindness which appears in a late fifteenth-century collection of carols and other poems:

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[52] *Rhetores Latini Minores,* ed. by Karl Halm (Leipzig: Teubneri, 1863), p. 615 and Faral, ed., *Les arts poétiques,* pp. 228–29, lines 1013–21.
[53] Katrin Ettenhuber, 'Hyperbole: Exceeding Similitude', in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, ed. by Sylvia Adamson and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 197–213.
[54] See the examples listed in *MED, iperbole,* n.

A good medycyn for sor eyen
for a man þat is almost blynd
lat hym go barhed all day agey þe wynd
tyll þe soȝne be sette
at even wrap hym in a cloke
and put hym in a hows full of smoke
and loke þat euery hol be well shett
and when hys eyen begyne to rope
fyll hem full of brynston and sope
and hyll hym well and warme
and yf he se not by þe next <morne> mone
as well at mydnyght as at none
I schal lese my ryȝt arme[55]

Just as genuine remedies promise that the reader will see the stars at midday, this parodic recipe claims that the patient will see as well at midnight as he or she does at midday. However, unlike those genuine recipes involving betony and laurel oil, this inverted remedy is obviously parodic: the advice would harm not heal. This suggests a satirical intent: the parody implies that genuine remedies, many of which were based upon trial and error, did more damage than good. The promise that the reader will see as well at midnight as at noon reaffirms this satirical message because it implies that the patient will see at all times as if it were night-time (that is, not at all). The same image is used in the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament,* which could suggest that it became conventional in satirical attacks upon medical practitioners. In that work, the satire is aimed directly at a specific medical practitioner, the inept Master Brundyche, who is claimed to 'seeth as wele at noone as at nyght' when treating patients.[56] There is a subtle difference, though, between *The Croxton Play's* comparison of noon and night and the above mock-remedy's comparison of night with noon. The latter order makes

[55] BodL, MS Eng Poet e.1, f. 21v. Edited in Davis, ed., *Medieval English Lyrics,* p. 235.
[56] *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments,* ed. by Norman Davis, EETS ss 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), line 537.

the satirical meaning slightly less obvious and draws the hyperbolic promise closer to those in serious recipes.

Another obvious parallel between these mock and serious recipes is that both are for blindness. Perhaps this reflects the fact that eye ailments were notoriously difficult to treat in the Middle Ages: the author of the mock remedy may have chosen blindness for his subject because it immediately conveyed the limitations of physicians' healing powers, while the authors and scribes of genuine remedies for eye afflictions may have included hyperbolic claims within their recipes in order to compensate for this known deficiency.[57] The crucial point, though, is that the stylistic overlap between these mock and genuine recipes does not lead to any modal confusion: the parodic recipe is made overtly parodic by its nonsensical and absurd advice, whilst the absurd potential of the serious recipes' hyperbole is circumscribed by the sensible and unremarkable herbal ingredients required by the cures.

Things are not, however, always this clear-cut. Sometimes it is more difficult to know how to interpret the hyperbole in recipes. The remedy below was copied scruffily by a late sixteenth-century hand in a manuscript containing serious medical texts by a mix of other fifteenth- and sixteenth-century scribes. It is the only text copied by this hand in a blank space at the bottom of a manuscript page (see Figure 5 in the appendix). It contains the same promise as the fifteenth-century mock remedy:

[57] In the Middle English translation of Bernard de Gordon's *Lilium medicinae,* it is claimed that ailments of the eye will be dealt with 'schortely [...] For þe pasciouns of þe yȝen biþ hard to knowe and hard to cure' (BodL, MS Ashmole 1505, f. 95r); see Bernardus de Gordonio, *Lilium medicinae* (Lyon, 1559), p. 254, for the Latin text and Demaitre, *Medieval Medicine*, p. 156 for further discussion.

> for to sey by nytgh as by day a[?]nant ys eye
> with they blod of a back and he shall sey by nyȝh[58]
>
> [*a[?]nant* = anoint; *back* = bat]

On the following leaf and in a much neater script, the hand that copies this recipe seems to identify himself as 'Rychard Slacke [...] sike in bodye but wholle' (see Figure 6 in the appendix).[59] This scribe may have considered the above remedy serious and authoritative; his ailing state may have made him particularly hopeful that it would prove efficacious. He too may have converted the promise's extravagant content back into realistic terms. But this reading is not guaranteed. The remedy seems to work through a sympathetic kind of natural magic in which the bat's blood transfers the bat's nocturnal vision to the patient. This disrupts the attempt to convert the hyperbolic guarantee of nocturnal vision back into credible terms, because it shifts that guarantee towards the literal, making the seemingly impossible phenomenon of night vision seem tantalisingly possible. A reader might still consider this marvellous guarantee authoritative and genuine: natural magic, which became more acceptable in the later Middle Ages, was deemed to extend the boundaries of what was previously thought possible by exploiting the hidden properties of things.[60] But one cannot *assume* that the scribe and all subsequent readers of the manuscript took this claim – which, the parodic recipes show, could be considered extravagant – seriously. This is not only because a few attempts at translating the recipe into practice would soon demonstrate that the promise was unfulfillable. Instead, the scribe may have copied the recipe with playful

[58] CUL, MS Ee.1.13, f. 138v.
[59] CUL, MS Ee.1.13, f. 139r. I am indebted to Daniel Wakelin for the attribution of these texts to one hand and the transcription of the identification.
[60] Page, *Magic in Medieval Manuscripts*, pp. 18–28; Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature,* pp. 73–79.

and whimsical intentions *from the outset*, delighting in the way in which it seemed poised between the possible and the impossible, the literal and the hyperbolic. His juxtaposition of 'sike' and 'wholle' when signing his name certainly suggests he was interested in playful paradoxes. Because the recipe is copied in isolation from the surrounding, more orthodox remedies by late medieval hands, there is little to circumscribe the range of connotations it puts into play for future readers: it could have been taken seriously but, perceived as extravagant and incongruous, it could also have teetered towards the absurd.

These close parallels with parodic remedies illuminate the various ways in which the language and stylistic ticks of recipes could have been interpreted by contemporary readers. If certain ways of describing ingredients or promising results were considered extravagant or absurd enough to feature in parodies as explicit as Henryson's 'Sum Practysis of Medecyne' or the mock-remedy for blindness, then they might have been considered absurd when they featured in modally ambiguous texts, such as the flood recipe or the recipe for nocturnal, bat-like vision. While Henryson's texts draw attention to the comic, playful and imaginative aspects of this absurdity, the aggressive and bathetic tone of his invective implies that such creativity is improper. The presence of absurdity in genuine recipes, however, need not always induce a bathetic reduction or imply a satirical intention: in the flood and bat's blood recipes, it could be interpreted more positively and playfully. Moreover, the presence of such absurdity does not automatically turn the recipe into a parody: to be recognised as a parody, the text's language must be identified in relation to, and as exceeding, a norm. As the manuscript context of the flood recipe suggested, language which seems parodic to one reader could seem entirely normal to another. The recipes' potential to appear

extravagant, absurd or whimsical does not, then, necessarily destabilise their reputation as practical writings but, like many of the examples examined in this thesis, it does make that reputation less certain.

Conclusion

A Censure of Some Writers

Many haue their time and paines
In writing cures imployd;
But he that by experience gaines
And writes what he hath tryed
I hould him wiser then that sort
Whoe for the thirst of fame
With toyle doe labour to report
What but retornes theyr shame.
They hould their Readers with delight
And hope of finding cure,
When proofe concludes no point is right
That did your health assure.[1]

This poem is copied by a seventeenth-century hand on a blank leaf shortly after several remedy collections copied by late medieval hands.[2] Although it might have been composed or copied in response to those recipes, it reads as a general meditation upon the practice of remedy writing, which continued to thrive in manuscripts until the seventeenth century at least. The tone is clearly critical: the author condemns those who write cures without having proved them beforehand. This is another formulation of the dichotomy between experience and authority (discussed in Chapter One). What is significant here, though, is the poet's emphasis on the *acts* of writing and reading: the poem is entitled 'A Censure of Some *Writers*' and refers to the process of 'writing' cures on two occasions. The noun 'readers' is also the only word in the middle of a line to be capitalised (which is sometimes used in texts from this period to add emphasis). Medical authority had long been associated with written texts passed from reader to reader, but

[1] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, p. 55.
[2] BodL, MS Ashmole 1438, Part I, pp. 6–31, 39–52.

discussions about authority normally concerned texts by named authorities such as Galen, Hippocrates and Pliny. These names stood as metonyms for, and in part obscured, the actual writings of those intellectual giants. In contrast, in 'A Censure of Some Writers', the materiality of the act of writing takes centre stage: the remedy writers in the poem 'with toyle doe labour to report | What but retornes theyr shame'. Although the poet is making a satirical point, these lines recall the way late medieval poets and scholars began to discuss their intellectual work through images of physical labour. In 'A Censure of Some Writers', then, recipes become crafted objects in the most material and physical sense of that word.

This emphasis on the material production of recipes is connected to, and supplemented by, a parallel emphasis on the recipes' rhetorical effects: as well as being physically shaped by a writer's quill, they are shaped linguistically in order to evoke 'delight' and 'hope' in the reader. Moreover, that emotional response is not fleeting or sporadic, but consuming and immobilising: remedy writers craft their texts in order to 'hould' readers within that emotional state. The poet suggests that such rhetorical manipulation is unethical because it does not lead to beneficial healing results: 'proofe' soon shows the recipes to be empty rhetoric. Although the word 'proofe' began to take on new meanings in the seventeenth century with the development of experimental methods closer to those conducted in modern laboratories, this poet's polemical point is similar to that suggested almost two centuries earlier in Petrarch's *Invective contra medicum*, where the Italian poet condemns physicians' use of rhetoric because it leads to the duping of patients and the inappropriate mixing of the mechanical and liberal

arts.[3] The poem also recalls Henryson's 'Sum Practysis of Medecyne' and that poet's sensitivity to the imaginative and rhetorical thought involved in crafting a language of specificity. However, what 'A Censure of Some Writers' makes more explicit is the reader responses these crafted structures produce: the emotional highs and lows, the delight and the disappointment. Although it might be part of its polemic, 'A Censure of Some Writers' suggests that not all were savvy enough to see how such structures were working upon them: as texts, and not just as bodily cures, the recipes could have real, sometimes damaging effects on readers.

In this thesis, I have made a similar claim, although I have suggested that the effects are not always negative: as materially and linguistically crafted texts, recipes could please, soothe, persuade, impress, convince, confuse, frustrate, challenge, and inspire. I have reached this conclusion by examining the formal and linguistic structures, manuscript layout and content of the recipes and by constructing possible horizons of interpretation and response. In so doing, I have considered how these structures and things work in other cultural discourses, including more literary ones. In many instances, such comparative analysis suggested that there was not one fixed way of responding to the recipes. For instance, temporal structures from recipes which recurred in more literary narratives were shown to signify both the wondrous and the ridiculous, the marvellous and the mundane. Furthermore, some of the structures and contents analysed, such as dead men's heads or attributions of recipes to bricklayers and tapsters are fairly uncommon within the collections; therefore, they immediately signal textual diversity. However, other features – such as the guarantees of rapid recovery and the

[3] See Marsh, ed. and trans., *Invectives*, pp. 10–19, 34–41, 88–91, 124–37. On seventeenth-century experimental techniques, see Wall, *Recipes for Thought,* pp. 209–50.

accrual of numerous recipes for one affliction – are ubiquitous. Ironically, though, it is often for these predictable, formulaic features that we have the strongest meta-discursive evidence for divergent reader responses: Henryson, Petrarch, John of Mirfield and Guy de Chauliac all interpreted the accumulative form of recipe collections differently, demonstrating, to return to Peggy Knapp's phrase, how recipes, even in their most predictable form, could 'elude the certainties of conceptual thought'.[4] So, although we must attend to the ways in which the formulaic structures of recipes aim to organise readers' healing actions into familiar and singular patterns, leaving little apparent room for variety, we should also be sensitive to the ways in which they simultaneously stimulate flexible, unpredictable and varied modes of reading like those provoked by the polysemous words and forms of literary texts.

This slipperiness in interpretation and emotional response points instantly to the 'problem with practicality': reading recipes involves more than merely doing what they say. Though many theorists of practical labour have acknowledged this by highlighting the importance of tacit knowledge and its lack of written record, there has not been substantial exploration of the variety of effects and affects recipes produce through their crafted or imaginative forms.[5] Of course, these responses are not always in tension with the remedies' practical purposes of communicating healing knowledge and alleviating bodily pain in the way that they are shown to be in 'A Censure of Some Writers': I have argued that many aesthetically, rhetorically, or imaginatively affective structures *help* to convey that information in a more emphatic, memorable, somatically precise or healing form. But, at the same time, there was always the possibility of

[4] Knapp, *Chaucerian Aesthetics* pp. 2–3.
[5] On tacit labour, see Introduction, fn. 64.

failure: words and forms might not have done what writers and readers expected them to do. We must be aware, though, that a modern critical judgement that a form had failed might impose a function upon that form that it was not expected to serve by its first readers. For instance (as Chapter Two argued) individuals who compiled lots of recipes and did not add navigational aids or did not complete the navigational systems they began may not have intended to use those recipes, at least not at every stage in the compilation process. Instead, they might have derived pleasure, confidence, and some mental or bodily relief simply from the acts of accruing and possessing them.

So, because recipe collections were patchwork creations produced from a variety of sources, were shaped by the shifting intentions of different authors and scribes, and were capable of producing diverse responses, we need to practise a different mode of reading when attending to their quirks, ambiguities and sporadic artfulness. We need a mode of reading which does not try to construct a single narrative of practicality or impracticality but is open to a shifting and unpredictable relationship between these things and the individuals involved in the texts' production and reception: a collection's relationship with practicality can seem to shift between recipe to recipe or even from line to line. Placing the recipes in conversation with other modes and genres helps us to understand this complex texture better, but we must remain sensitive to the differences between them: although recipes contain the same words, forms, and things, and pattern similar somatic, emotional or cognitive responses to other modes of writing, they are never identical. Inappropriate uses of human corpses present different challenges and ethical dilemmas in a recipe than in a fabliau. Likewise, although similes are considered of little artistic merit in Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova*, they carry tremendous rhetorical weight in remedies. This thesis has shown that

remaining sensitive to these differences as we approach the piecemeal, polysemous texture of practical writings through literary writings, and vice versa, will enable a richer understanding of medieval textual culture and its overlaps, exchanges and differences. It is only by integrating practical texts into our analytical approach that we can fully understand the uniqueness and influence of the more canonical literary texts we study.

Looking Forward in Time and Scholarship

The kind of remedy books examined in this thesis continued to circulate in manuscript for the next three centuries; indeed, they have a modern analogue in the scrapbook or notebook. From the late fifteenth century onwards, however, recipe collections of all kinds – medical, household, and culinary – also began to circulate in print. As Paul Slack has shown, remedy collections were one of the most popular genres of vernacular medical writing produced by sixteenth-century English printers: although only eighteen new remedy collections were printed between 1486–1604, there were at least ninety-seven editions of these.[6]

These early modern vernacular collections have received more scholarly attention than their medieval manuscript counterparts. Some of this attention has addressed the same themes and questions as medieval scholarship. For example, Elaine Leong has compared the personal remedy collections and household inventories of an early seventeenth-century noblewoman in order to show how many and which of the remedies were actually used.[7] Peter Murray Jones, Michelle DiMeo, Elizabeth Furdell

[6] Paul Slack, 'Mirrors of Health and Treasures of Poor Men: The Uses of the Vernacular Medical Literature of Tudor England', in *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Charles Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 237–73 (p. 243).
[7] Elaine Leong, 'Making Medicines in the Early Modern Household', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 82 (2008), 145–68.

and Mary Fissell have explored the social, scribal, commercial, and intellectual networks recipes circulated in and the newly diverse (or not so diverse) readerships they reached through vernacularisation and the technology of print.[8] There has, however, been a much greater focus upon gender in scholarship on early modern recipes than studies of medieval texts: increased literacy levels in the sixteenth century and onwards allowed women to take a more active role in the dissemination of medical knowledge.[9]

Other studies have posed questions similar to those asked of medieval material in this thesis: namely, the relationship between recipes, rhetoric, and literature.[10] For instance, Mary Fissell has compared the modes of reading encouraged by the prefatory materials to the *Erra Pater*, a sixteenth-century printed almanac containing a selection of remedies, to those cultivated by elaborate Latin syntax and more literary vernacular writings.[11] Furthermore, Wendy Wall, Jayne Elisabeth Archer, and Robert Appelbaum have emphasised the explicitly rhetorical nature of the title pages and prefaces to early modern printed collections and the way those prefaces comment self-consciously upon flowery or plain language use.[12] Wall and Archer explore the way in which the frequent

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[8] Peter Murray Jones, 'Book Ownership and the Lay Culture of Medicine in Tudor Cambridge', in *The Task of Healing: Medicine, Religion, and Gender in England and the Netherlands, 1485–1800,* ed. by Hilary Marland and Margaret Pelling (Rotterdam, Erasmus, 1996), pp. 49–68; DiMeo, 'Authorship and Medical Networks', pp. 25–46; Elizabeth Lane Furdell, *Publishing and Medicine in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: University of Rochester Press, 2002); Mary Fissell, 'Popular Medical Writing', in *Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660,* ed. by Joad Raymond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 417–30.

[9] E.g. Leong, 'Collecting Knowledge', 81–103; Rebecca Laroche, *Medical Authority and English Women's Herbal Texts, 1550–1650* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Alisha Rankin, *Panaceia's Daughters: Noblewomen as Healers in Early Modern Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Wall, *Recipes for Thought*, pp. 20–64.

[10] For studies arguing that the imperatives, ordered stages and syntactic arrangements of early modern recipes demonstrate medical writers' rhetorical skill and adaptation of the plain style see Lisa Kay Melancon, 'Rhetoric, Remedies, Regimen' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of South Carolina, 2005), pp. 114–84 and Elizabeth Tebeaux, *The Emergence of a Tradition: Technical Writing in the English Renaissance, 1475–1650* (Amityville, New York: Baywood Publishers, 1997), pp. 137–74.

[11] Mary E. Fissell, 'Readers, Texts, and Contexts: Vernacular Medical Works in Early Modern England', in *The Popularization of Medicine 1650–1850,* ed. by Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 72–96.

[12] Wall, *Recipes for Thought, passim.;* Jayne Elisabeth Archer, '"The Quintessence of Wit": Poems and Recipes in Early Modern Women's Writing', in DiMeo and Pennell, eds, *Reading and Writing Recipe Books,*

early modern designation of recipes as 'conceits' links those texts conceptually and stylistically to other kinds of playful, witty, and figurative language: culinary recipes for foodstuffs shaped into words, containing poems, or imitating real-life animals and plants are just as interested as poetic writings in the relationship between the abstract and the material, the intersection of nature and art, and the transformation of one into the other.[13]

The early modern printed collections analysed in these studies are, however, written in a different style from late medieval manuscript collections: although the basic linguistic structures and styles of the recipes themselves are the same, early modern printed collections in particular contain title pages and extensive prologues with much more self-conscious reflection and meta-discursive discussion about the style and rhetorical effects of the recipes. One might wonder whether this meta-discursive discussion actually stimulated and perpetuated the very effects it claimed to detect. In spite of these differences, though, future scholarship on recipes might wish to pay more attention to the relationship between late medieval manuscript collections and their early modern counterparts in manuscript and print.[14] After all, it is significant that the seventeenth-century copyist of 'A Censure of Some Writers' wrote the poem *after* a fifteenth-century recipe collection. Did he or she do so merely because the remedy book roughly accorded with the poem's subject? Or is the poem evidence of a more thoughtful response to that collection and a recognition of continuity? Continuing to ask

pp. 114–34; Robert Appelbaum, 'Rhetoric and Epistemology in Early Printed Recipe Collections', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies,* 3 (2003), 1–35.

[13] Archer, '"The Quintessence of Wit", pp. 114–34; Wall, *Recipes for Thought*, pp. 65–111.

[14] A few studies have begun to explore the interaction between manuscript and print: e.g., Fissell, 'Popular Medical Writing', p. 419; Elaine Leong, 'Medical Recipe Collections in Seventeenth-Century England: Knowledge, Text, and Gender' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2005), pp. 259–95, which explores the relationship between seventeenth-century manuscript and print remedy books. More work needs to be done, however, on comparing early modern collections to their medieval counterparts.

questions such as these from the boundary between manuscript and print will allow us to explore further how the medium of a remedy collection affected readers' engagement with it.

This thesis has shown, after all, that it was the manuscript form of a collection – and the continual reframing and rearrangement of recipes that this promoted – that created the array of different voices detectable in some remedy books. It can be hard to distinguish these voices with certainty, as demonstrated by one final example: a recipe in a late medieval collection advises the reader that the cure 'may be made with þe erbes þouȝ þou ne haue al þis spycery'.[15] Inexpensive herbs are substituted for costly spices. But, a few leaves later, a recipe for 'a precious water' calls for 'filynge of golde' and claims that the water should be kept 'in a vessel of syluer or of golde'.[16] Do these recipes testify to the gulf between one compiler's aspiration and their reality? Or are they evidence of lots of different people's aspirations and intentions, fused together through the dynamic circulation of recipes into a rich but confusing medley? We cannot know. Such confusion affirms, though, the central argument of this thesis: an encounter with a remedy book was never just an encounter with bodies, animal matter, and real-world referents. First and foremost, it was an encounter between a multitude of readers, writers, and texts.

[15] NLW, MS Peniarth 388, f. 11r–v.
[16] NLW, MS Peniarth 388, f. 14v.

Appendix

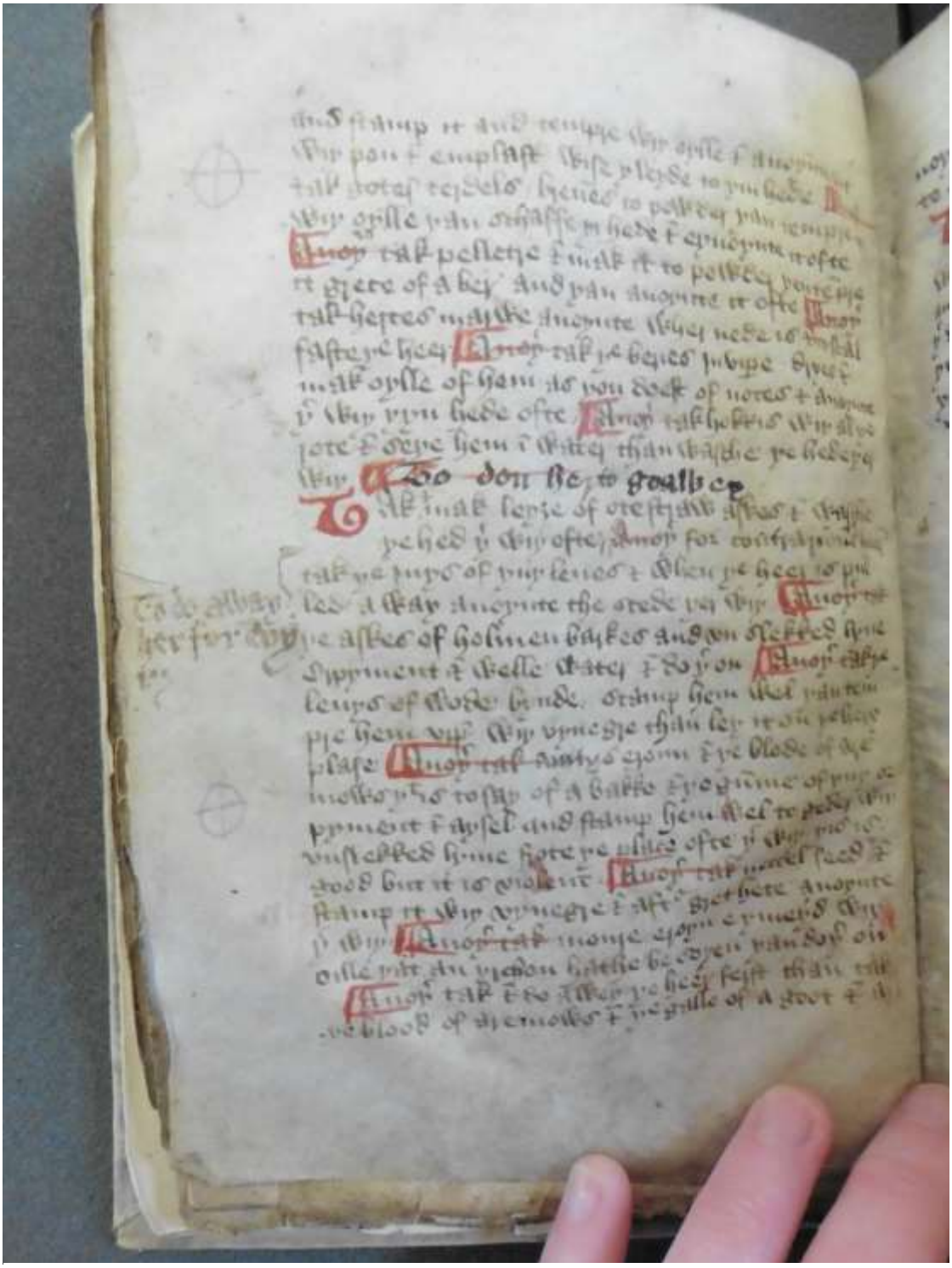


Figure 1: YM, MS XVI.E.32, f. 17v

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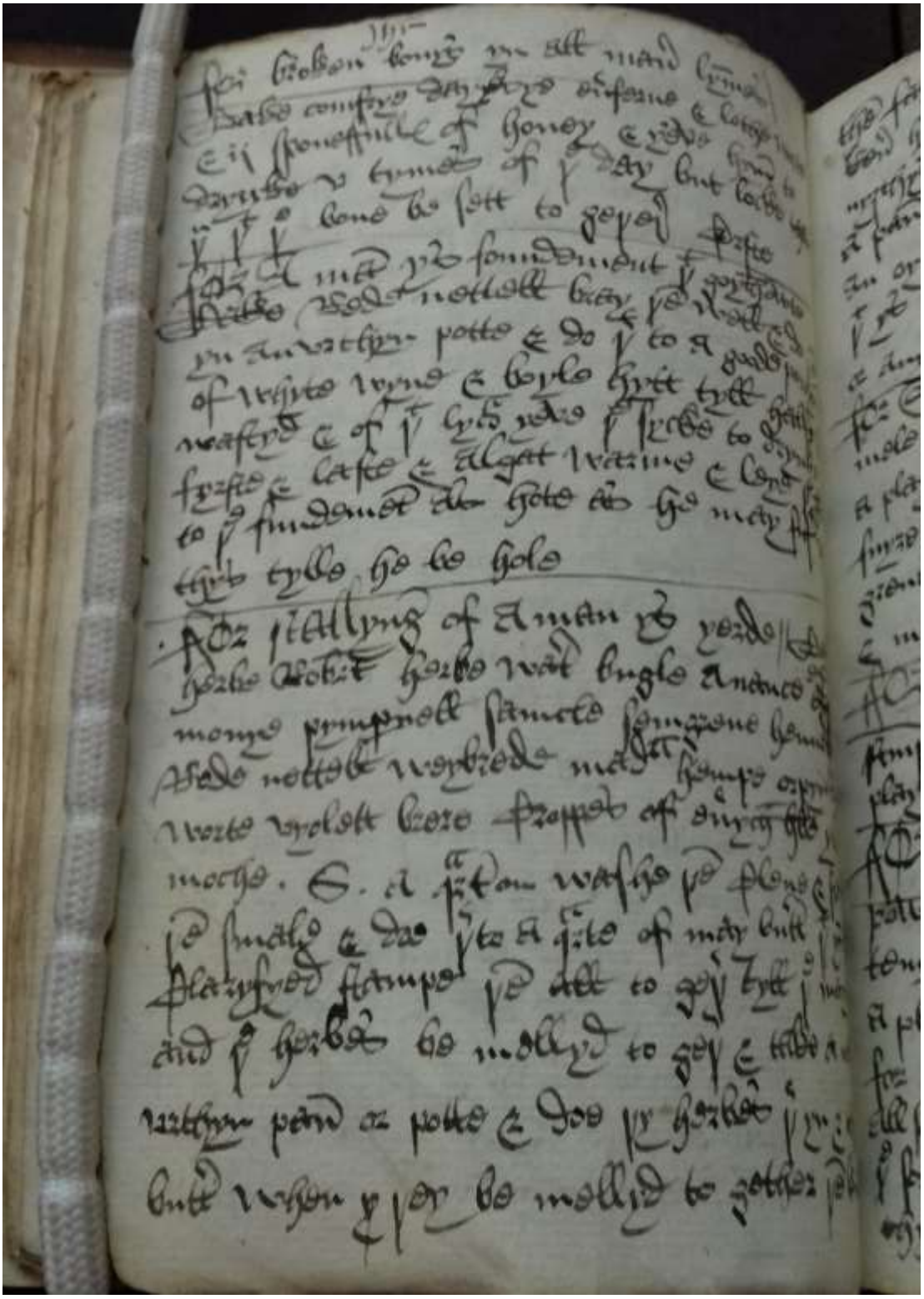


Figure 2: BodL, MS Ashmole 1389, p. 86

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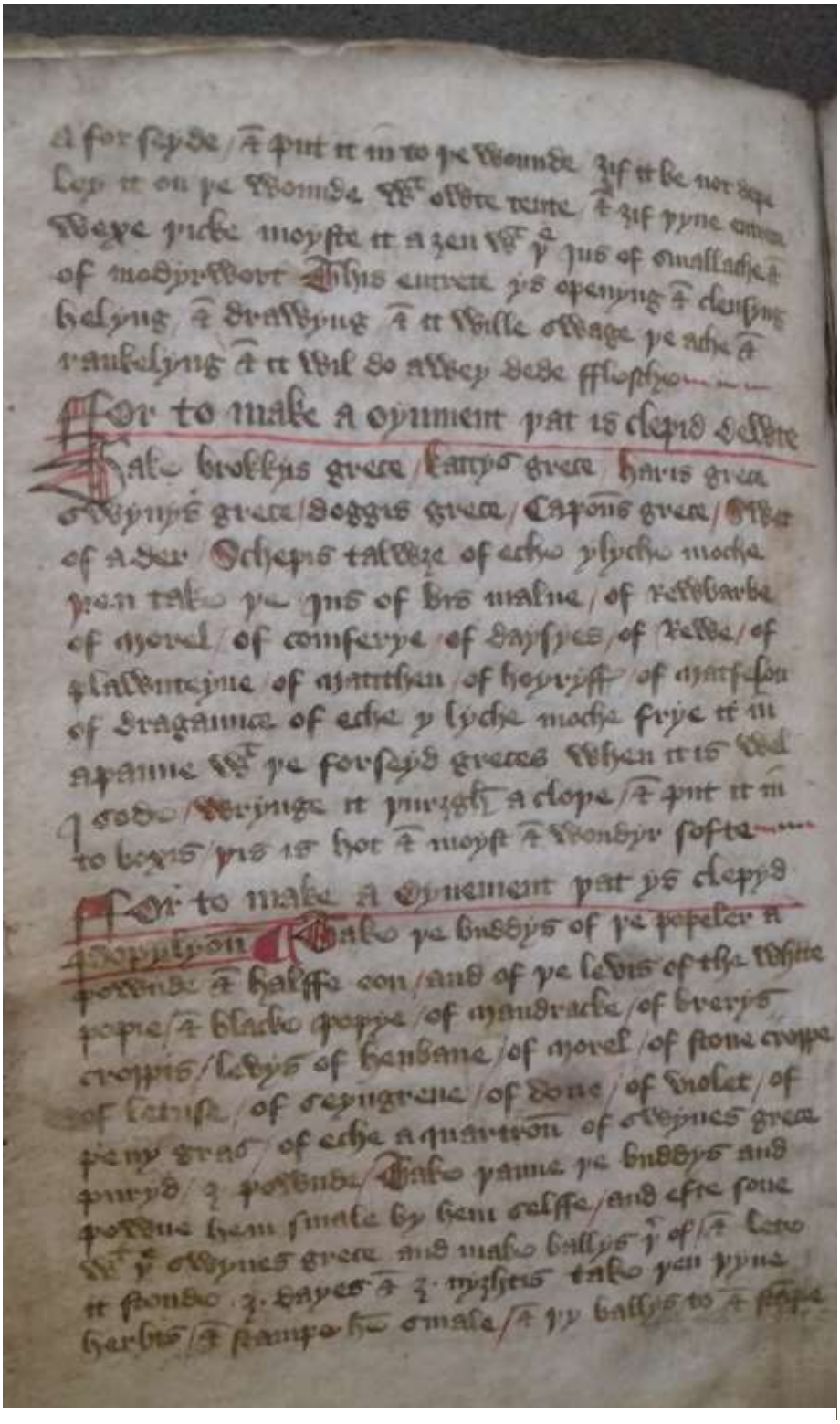


Figure 3: BodL, MS Douce 84, f. 38v

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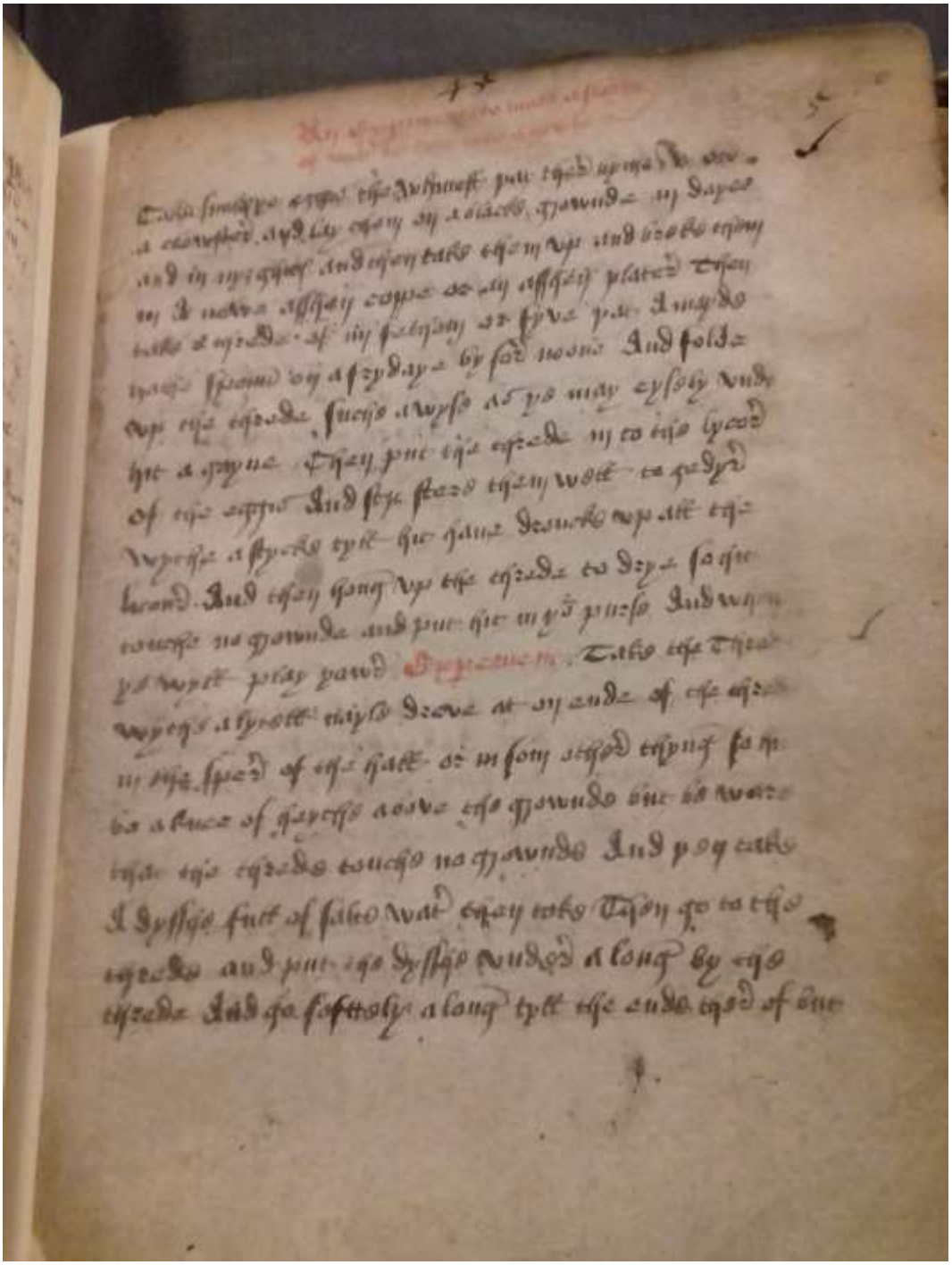


Figure 4: BL, MS Sloane 1315, f. 90r.

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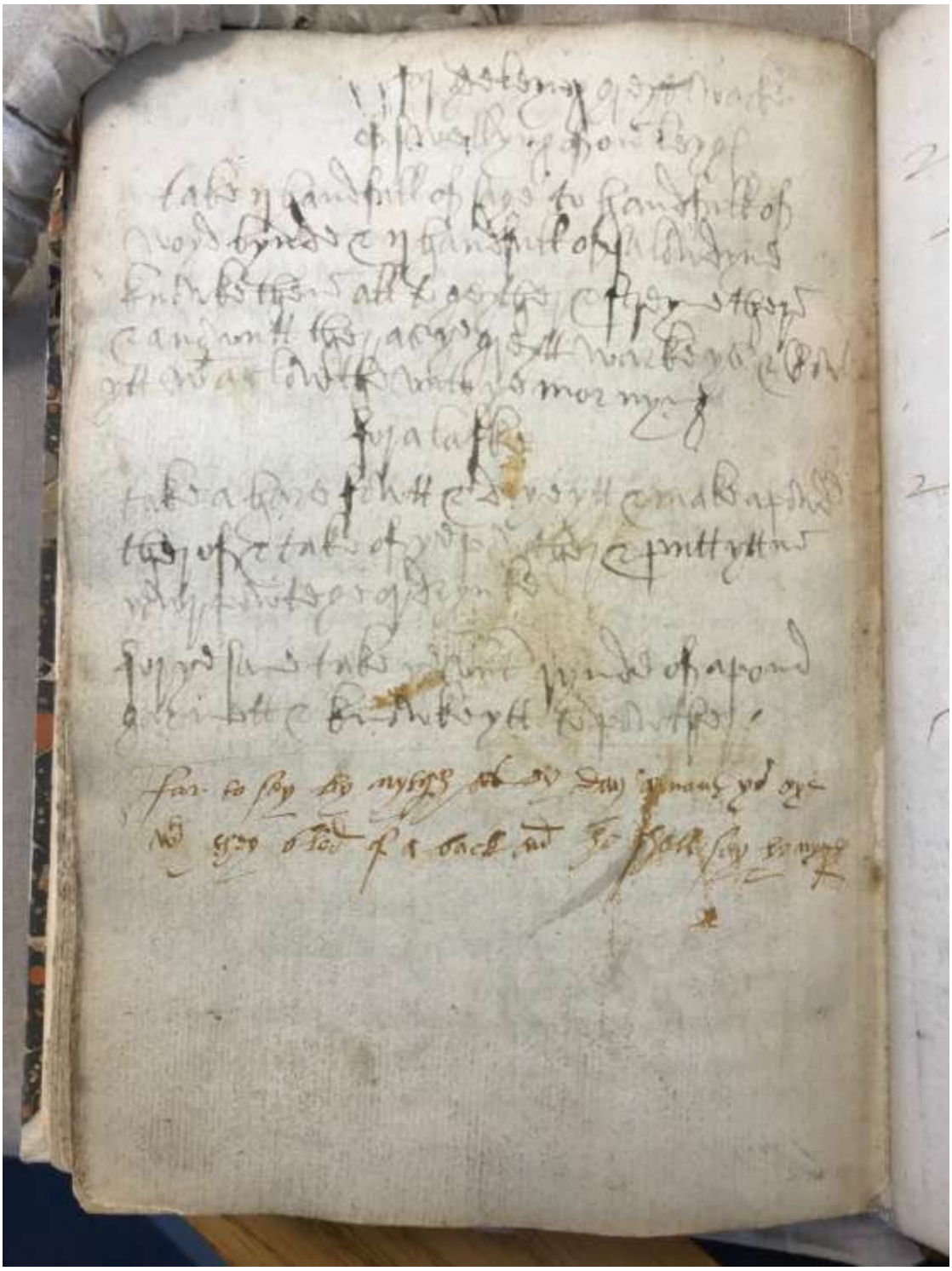


Figure 5: CUL, MS Ee.1.13, f. 138v

My own photograph, reproduced with the kind permission of Cambridge University Library.

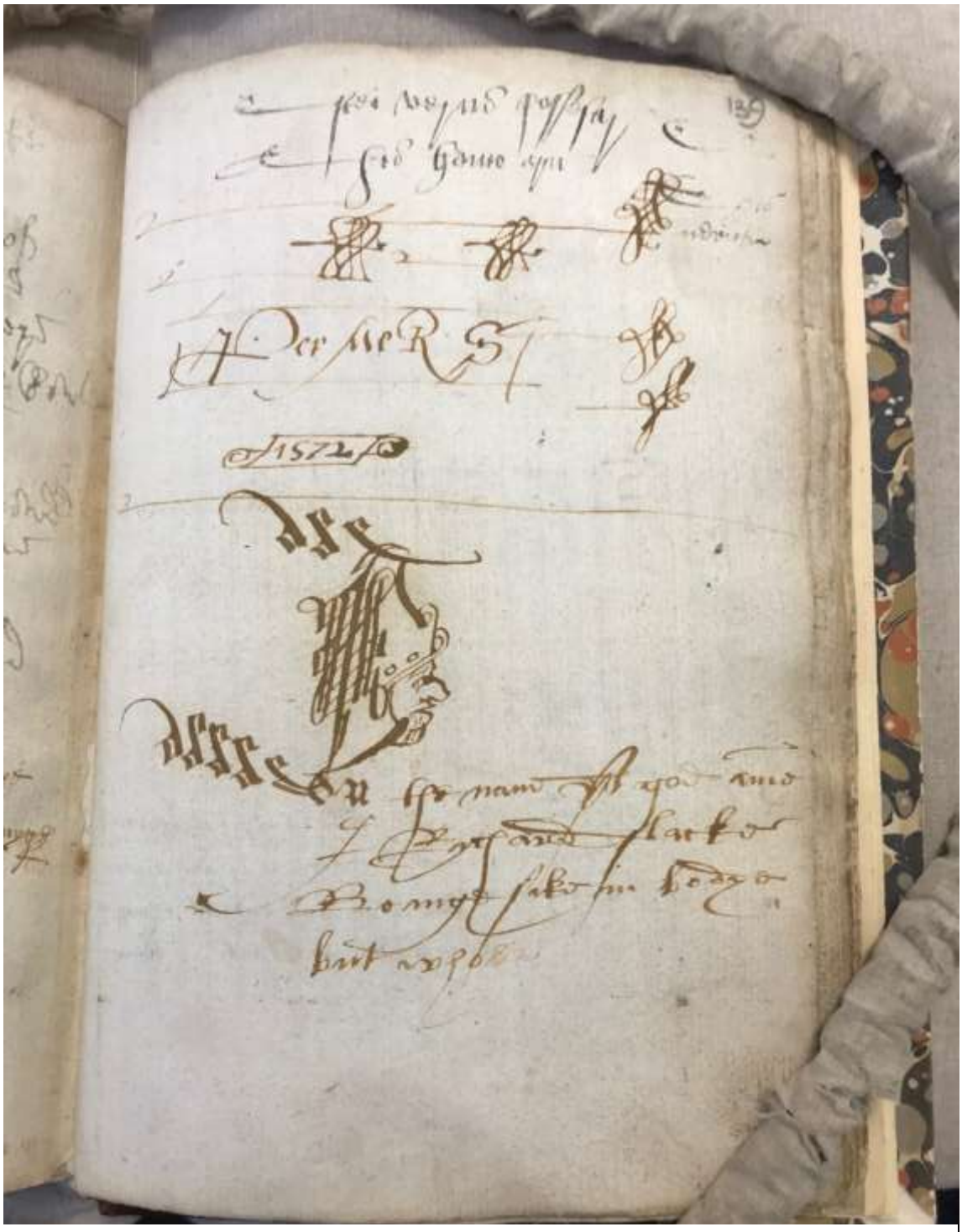


Figure 6: CUL, MS Ee.1.13, f. 139r

My own photograph, reproduced with the kind permission of Cambridge University Library.

Figure 7: Vernacular Medical Collections Used in Sample		
Manuscript	**No. of Collections**	**Folios/Pages**
BodL, MS Rawlinson C. 506	4	15r–79v; 82r–109r; 115r–17v and 146r–66v and 171r–74v (collection is split); 130r–45r
BodL, MS Ashmole 1389	1	2–256
BL, MS Sloane 468	1	7v–80v
BL, MS Lansdowne 680	1	22r–73r
YM, MS XVI E 32	4	15r–19v; 82r–109r; 115r–117v and 146r–66v and 171r–74v (collection split during binding); 130r–45v
WT, MS London Medical Society 136	1	1r–95v
BodL, MS Laud misc. 553.	1	34v–74v
HEHL, MS HM 1336	2	2v–18v and 29r–34v (collection split during binding); 19r–28v
HEHL, MS HM 64	4	104r–113r; 113v–120r; 143v–53r; 156v–76r
WT, MS Wellcome 542	1	1r–20v
WT, MS Wellcome 5262	1	3r–61v
BodL, MS Ashmole 1443	2	193–350; 401–460
BodL, MS Ashmole 1438	5	Part I, 8-25; 96-126; Part II, 1-57; 83-106; 120-61
BodL, MS Douce 84	1	1v–24v
TCC, MS R. 14. 32	1	116r–27v
BL, MS Additional 19674	1	2r–34v
BL, MS Sloane 1315	1	119r–49r
BL, MS Additional 33996	1	80v–148v
BL, MS Sloane 3866	3	14r–52v; 62r–80r; 80r–89v
BL, MS Harley 2378	2	17r–61v; 121r–154v
BL, MS Additional 34210	2	5r–22r; 25r–48r
BL, MS Harley 1602	1	13v–23v
BodL, MS Hatton 29	1	89–95
BodL, MS Ashmole 750	1	184–94
BodL, MS Selden Supra 70	3	37r–64v; 65r–75r; 123r–29v

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(Unless otherwise stated, folio numbers in brackets note prose or verse remedy collections and herbals that I have consulted)

Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS 572 (ff. 7r–34v)

Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Brogyntyn II.1 (ff. 89v–90v; 129r–30r)

Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 369 (ff. 18v; 38r–53r; 68r–70v; 75r–87v; 88r–90v; 97r–98v; 103r –114v)

Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 388 (ff. 2v–3r; 7r–40r)

Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 403 (pp. 239–63)

Cambridge, Gonville and Caius, MS 345/620 (ff. 33v–34v)

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Dd. 6.29 (ff. 34r–106r; 106v–109v)

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Dd. 10.44 (ff. 120–22v; 128v–31v; 135r–36r; 138r–39v)

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Dd. 11.45 (ff. 131v–44v)

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Ee. 1.13 (ff. 101r–8r; ff. 129v–39v)

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Ee. 1.15 (ff. 14v–24v; 65r–70v; 78r–98r; 101v–56v)

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Kk. 6.33 (ff. 23r–26r, 29r–37r; 42v–43v; 47v–92r; 98r–113r)

Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys Library, MS 1661 (pp. 288–309)

Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R. 14.32 (ff. 104r–12v; 116r–27v; 132r–34r; 134v–39v)

Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R. 14.39 (ff. 2r–4r; 4v–12v; 13v–17v; 18r–28r)

Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R. 14.51 (ff. 6v–47v)

Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.14.52 (ff. 104r–106v; 135r–138v; 264r–72r)

Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O. 1.13 (21v–22v; 46r–76v; 145r–54r; 166v–72v; 178v – 88v; 194v–204r; 205v–12v; 220r–21v)

Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O. 1.65 (ff. 160r–67r; 233r–41r; 243r–69v)

Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O. 2.13 (ff. 100r–14r; 116r–18r; 120v–31r; 168v–78v 179r–81r)

London, British Library, Ms Additional 10440 (ff. 55v–57v)

London, British Library, MS Additional 12056 (ff. 3r–30r, a copy of *Here Men May See The Virtues of Herbes*)

London, British Library, MS Additional 12195 (ff. 139v–56v)

London, British Library, MS Additional 17866 (ff. 5r–16r)

London, British Library MS Additional 19674 (ff. 2r–50v; 57v–60r; 61r; 68r; 69v–71r; 73r–78r).

London, British Library, MS Additional 33996 (ff. 80v–148v)

London, British Library, MS Additional 34111 (f. 40r-v, prologue to *Speculum medicorum*)

London, British Library, MS Additional 34210 (ff. 5r–22r; 25r–48r)

London, British Library, MS Harley 1602 (ff. 13v–23v)

London, British Library, MS Harley 2375 (ff. 1r–32v)

London, British Library, MS Harley 2378 (ff. 17r–61v; 121r–54v)

London, British Library, MS Harley 2390 (f. 119v, list of the humoral qualities of herbs)

London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 680 (ff. 22r–73r)

London, British Library, MS Sloane 4 (William Worcester's medical notebook)

London, British Library, MS Sloane 56 (ff. 1r–100r, John Arderne's surgical writings)

London, British Library, MS Sloane 140 (ff. 52r–56v)

London, British Library, MS Sloane 147 (ff. 94r–112r)

London, British Library, MS Sloane 213 (f. 138r, prose prologue to medical texts)

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London, British Library, MS Sloane 468 (ff. 2r–80v)

London, British Library, MS Sloane 1315 (ff. 88v–116v; 119r–49r)

London, British Library, MS Sloane 1571 (ff. 14v–36v)

London, British Library MS Sloane 2457/2458 (ff. 2r–7r)

London, British Library MS Sloane 2460 (f. 34v)

London, British Library, MS Sloane 3160 (f. 153r, verse prologue to medical texts)

London, British Library, MS Sloane 3466 (f. 6r, verse prologue to medical texts)

London, British Library, MS Sloane 3866 (ff. 7r–8r; 8v–12v; 14r–52v; 62r–80r; 80r–89v)

London, Wellcome Trust, MS Wellcome 405 (f. 7r–40r)

London, Wellcome Trust, MS Wellcome 542 (ff. 1r–20v)

London, Wellcome Trust, MS Wellcome 5262 (ff. 3r–61v)

London, Wellcome Trust, MS London Medical Society 136 (ff. 1r–95v)

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 750 (ff. 142r–47v; 169v–79r; 184–94r)

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1389 (pp. 2–226)

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1393 (ff. 1r–4v)

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1397 (117v–18v)

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole, 1413 (pp. 33–74; 75–130)

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1432 (part I, pp. 3-24; part II, pp. 25-70; part III, pp. 71-84; part V, pp. 109–32, 135–44)

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1434 (ff. 1r–131r, John of Arderne's Latin surgical writings)

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Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1443 (pp. 3-11; 193–350; 401–60)

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Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 78 (ff. 7v–17v)

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