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The Several Sages: The Late Middle English Herbal in its Genre, Manuscript and Printed Context
Master's Thesis for the Research Master Medieval Studies at Utrecht University



SANGE
Woodcut from Hieronymus de Lobel,
"REPERTORIUM" (Antwerp, 1541)



Under the auspices of Prof. Dr O.S.H. Lie at Utrecht University

With the supervision of Prof. Dr L.A.J.R. Houwen at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum

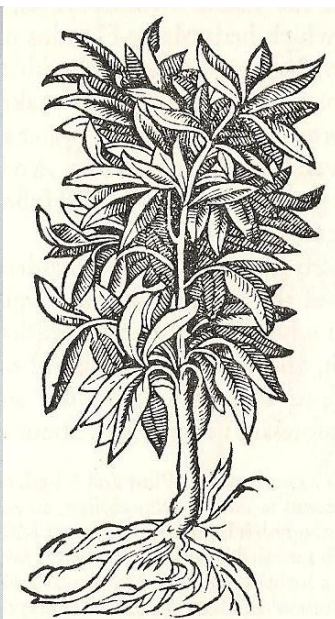


FIG. 7. *Salvia*, sage.
From *Naturalia Alberti Magni* (1548)

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0. Preface

The present Master's thesis for the prestige programme in Medieval Studies at Utrecht University was written during an internship at the Chair of Old and Middle English Language, Literature and Culture at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum in Germany, and was supervised by Prof. Dr L.A.J.R. Houwen. The tension in creating an inventory of all available primary and secondary material while simultaneously producing an analytical work for academia has provided both a tantalising task of productivity and, hopefully, an effort in which both parts are complementary. Constraints of time and means have, however, prevented personal investigation of manuscripts; apart from an earlier visit to Cambridge, these have been described on the basis of catalogues. Some sources such as unpublished dissertations could only be accounted for bibliographically. Most helpful for the inventory chores have been the *Manual of the Writings in Middle English* Vol. 10, ed. G. Keiser and the electronic Voigts-Kurtz index of *Scientific and Medical Writings in Old and Middle English* (eVK); for the bibliography most grateful use has been made of EndNote.

The author claims little prior knowledge or special expertise in the field of botanic lore. However, in the course of investigations the transmission of information between cultures and languages in general, as well as the specific issue of continuity and change at the crossroads of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, have ensured an ongoing interest in the thesis's completion. In doing so the initial skepticism of superstitions present in mediaeval medicine has made way for a preliminary appreciation of herbalism in all its magical, medicinal and botanical contexts. From the healing and nurturing herbs of early culture to the proving of pharmaceutical usage by contemporary laboratory research, plant sciences are a constant in the history of humanity. Now that once again "all [German] medical practitioners have to pass an examination in phytotherapy before being allowed to practise", it is imperative that the traditions of herbal literature should be researched. The present paper may at the very least facilitate opportunities for such future study.

A number of people are to be thanked for their contributions towards the present effort. Professor Houwen has given generous advice and encouragement during his leave of absence. Professor O.S.H. Lie has graciously accepted a position as a secondary reader and supervisor. Professors P.W.M. Wackers and M. Mostert, of Utrecht University, have offered their support throughout the period of studies. Dr L.S. Chardonens of the Radboud University, Nijmegen, has been a source of inspiration and an introduction into manuscript study in late-mediaeval England. The librarians of the Wren Library at Trinity College and the University Library in Cambridge are gratefully acknowledged for their assistance on an earlier visit to the manuscript materials. Similarly, the staff at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Utrecht University Library, the Radboud University Library and Leiden University Library are commended for continuing cooperation, as are the student assistants at the Chair for Mediaeval English at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum. Final thanks are due to C.H.M. Drieshen, MA, for exchanges of thoughts on numerous occasions.

There are also a number of people and institutions that are to be thanked for providing opportunities to develop individuality and endurance. Specifically, the various student support services at Utrecht University are distinctly remembered for their failure to render information on the procedures concerning students taking an internship at a foreign university. In the midst of a bureaucratic cluster bomb of referrals and dismissals an unspoken conspiracy emerged that any student straying from the trodden study path should forsake administrative or financial support. The resulting hardships have yielded excellent motivation in order to accomplish exactly what most distinguishes scholars and disgusts clerks: unconventionality. Similar gratitude is extended to the student counsellors at the Radboud University Nijmegen, who, with one notable exception, refrained from any attempt toward personal guidance; this thesis testifies to an independent mind.

1. Introduction

“... to estimate the several influences of sweet-smelling roots, and scented pollen-laden flowers, or aromatic balms, and of dark and fragrant woods, of spikenard that sickens, of hovenia that makes men mad, and of aloes that are said to be able to expel melancholy from the soul.”

– Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891)

1.1. Academic overview

Natural lore can be transmitted in either of two ways: orally, with possible recourse to the plants themselves, and written down, creating a tradition at some remove from the original study object. When dealing with plant medicine most scholars seem content with the latter, taking the texts as the starting point of their investigations, imposing on them criteria that serve to prove their point. In the history of herbal literature, problems involved with the definition of terms have led to the proliferation of opposing views on the genre, backed up by an equally selective use of sources. After the true humanist fashion the Middle Ages are generally seen as a low tide in all sciences. Speaking of a thousand years of plant knowledge a botanist may dismiss the era as “degenerate”,¹ a historian of science can call attention to the “infeasibility” of herbal recipes,² while a sociologist will deplore the decline of oral lore in mediaeval society.³ Connoisseurs of art qualify illustrations in mediaeval herbals as “inadequate”,⁴ whereas the literary scholar is scornful of scribes and their “careless copying”.⁵ In all accounts the valuation of the genre is determined by its definition, in turn chosen to corroborate a pre-determined conviction. The texts themselves are cited as support, the weight of their words subservient to the cause of scholarly study for which they can be used.

Contrary to the belief of some,⁶ however, the herbal does not commence in literary times. It started when man first determined which plants he could eat, which he could use to ease pain, and from which to stay clear. It has been suggested that the observance of nature’s cycle gave rise to religion as well as literature.⁷ Seen from this vantage point the rise of herbalism and its further course in later literary texts can be better reconstructed than by imposing on it a modernist theory. In this manner it may be possible to define the essence of a herbal proper, in contrast to its related genres. A preliminary attempt was made by Cockayne in distinguishing *leechdoms* (remedies for illnesses), *wortcunning* (herbal lore) and *starcraft* (astrology).⁸ This is a crucial division, because it separates recipes ordered by affliction from those listed per plant and those influenced by the stars. The first would have been useful to a doctor who could purchase the necessary herbs in a store, since the description of how to gather them in nature is generally only given in the second. The above distinction is maintained and elaborated in the reference work of Keiser by setting apart herbals, medicinal tracts, remedybooks or leechdoms, and charms; encyclopaedias are a different branch altogether, as are astrology, agriculture and culinary recipes.⁹ In later texts it is necessary too to note tensions with alchemy, chemistry (distillation) as well as homeopathy (oils).

¹ Morton (1981), 82.

² Scragg (1989), 27.

³ Brévar (2008), 36.

⁴ Blunt (1979), 11-12.

⁵ Rohde (1922), 55.

⁶ Arber (1913), 3.

⁷ Raven (1947), 1.

⁸ Cockayne (1864), I v.

⁹ Keiser (1998), xi-xii.

1.2. Problematisation

Marginalised by institutional health care, the herbal of today may be thought to protrude upon matters of magic, medicine, folklore and botany. Indeed, in different times any of these elements may have been emphasised. To the Egyptians magic may have been the operational power behind herbal remedies. In the Hippocratean tradition herbs played a part subservient to the role of the physician. For a mediaeval encyclopaedian the etymology of plant names could define their core operation, sparking many a synonym. Since the Renaissance determination of herbs has been an aesthetic goal in itself, paving the way for the current Linnaean terminology. Sometimes priority may have been given to synonyma, description, and medicinal use.¹⁰ At other times, however, the preoccupation with nomenclature obscured the actual definition of a herb.¹¹ Yet plant designation, its alternate names, its determination and operations have been a part of the canon of herbal lore, and therefore of herbal writing, throughout time.¹² In the course of the ages the herbal influenced, and was influenced by, related genres. It will thus be necessary for the current argument to draw a line in defining herbals that does justice to its origin and core properties, but does not incorporate every related text of fundamentally different background, nor every later offshoot into a different direction. As Makinen notes, herbals are a genre of their own, only tangential with other genres.¹³

For the purpose of this paper, then, a herbal is defined as a text listing per plant its name, its possible synonyms, its description, and its medicinal uses. Further included may be specific information on philosophical qualities, habitat, or instructions for gathering and administration. Specifically excluded are all herbal recipes (omitting description), glossaries (omitting uses and descriptions), oils and waters (offshoots), leechdoms (not listed per plant) and other treatises. Naturally, no hard line can be drawn in all cases; seen from the origins of the genre, it would indeed be unnatural to be as dogmatic about definitions as some scholars have been in the past. The mediaeval herbal may lie between the modern notions of medicine, folklore and religion; in its origins it is indiscriminatingly intertwined. Part of the purpose of this paper will thus be to propose a viewpoint of the evidence from the pre-literary traditions of man's role in nature. As the herbal has been defined as medical in material, the decline of medicinal information in the botanical texts of the Renaissance will be a delineation of the time period under discussion here. Though there are internal criteria by which to divide the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, it will be seen that these lines are not only intersecting but in many ways overlapping. Last, because this thesis is the result of an internship at the Chair of the department of mediaeval English, the focus of the present paper will necessarily lie on the mediaeval time frame and Western European area.

1.3. Methodology

The constraints on time and space, both for the writer and for his written work, bring with them a selection of applicable methods and sources. The herbal genre tradition, sketched from standard works, is supplemented by specific studies of related texts in areas of botany, magic and medicine (chapter two). By returning to its origins and early history it is hoped that later herbal texts can be elucidated. Citations from primary literature are provided where possible but the bulk is saved for the third chapter. There the English strands of the manuscript transmission are investigated in the light of continental originals. Because of the impossibility of personal inspection, the manuscripts are described from online or printed catalogues, handlists and manuals, repertoria and incipitoria.

¹⁰ Stannard (1969), 217.

¹¹ Dawson (1929), 71.

¹² Hunt (1989a), xvii.

¹³ Mäkinen (2004), 153.

The end of the manuscript era enters naturally into the period of the printing press. Its production is presented from the point of biographies and bibliographies of printers, the study of their founts, and ancient as well as modern editions, in chapter three as well; similarities and differences in the layout and use of both media, explained in theory, clarify practical problems in their transmission. All above elements resurface in chapter four, as genre history and overlap in manuscript and print contribute to the picture of form and content in the study of one specific herb of the genus *Salvia*.

For the above analysis and for the appended inventory several sources have been perused. The secondary literature required for the first chapter was found through the COPAC catalogues. Manuscript witnesses were assembled by virtue of the prose and verse *Indices of Middle English*, Keiser's *Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, and the electronic Voigts-Kurtz incipit index, alongside individual library catalogues, specially of the British, Bodleian and Cambridge Library. Printed editions were traced through the prose and verse *Indices of Printed Middle English*, both the (*Revised*) *English Short-Title Catalogue* and the *Incunabula Short-Title Catalogue* and finally *Early English Books Online*, an invaluable tool for full text and images of early printed literature. The case study on sage was constructed through testimonia from title-pages, prefaces and content of mediaeval texts substantiated by modern monographs on its scientific status and unbroken use. Reading list lacunae were filled by both supervisors with use of the WEMAL *Artes*-bibliography. The bibliography built by EndNote is intended to give a good view of late Middle English herbal literature in its genre, manuscript and printed context for the period between c.1400 and 1600 CE.

1.4. Areas of interest

With the abovementioned limitations in mind an interesting state of affairs arises. The English herbal is of course a later attestation of a genre that had been in place for a long time. It will be worthwhile to note how the different elements of the genre and how related genres might have influenced this particular strand of herbals. The fact that there is vernacular transmission should be investigated as well, looking at both the producers and the users of English herbals. The first source is of course the manuscript, with its collection of miscellaneous material into a coherent whole. At the end of the period this medium evolves into the printed book which perfects its approach to the material of both production and compilation. The change coincides with the traditional break of Middle Ages and Renaissance, of mediaeval thought and humanism. By studying one example of the late-mediaeval English herbal in detail, however, it will again be seen that a modern notion of history cannot account in full for the state of the texts themselves. Therefore the texts will be allowed to speak aloud, and any conclusion on the herbal in the later English Middle Ages will only be reached from the vantage point of their verdicts. The central question to be answered in the course of the paper will therefore be defined as follows: how is the transition from mediaeval manuscript to Renaissance print realised within the English herbal?

The ongoing changes in the herbal genre are reflected by a multitude of terms for the herb itself. Interestingly, the term 'herbal' is only in existence since 1525, coined as a translation of the French *herbier* and Latin *herbarium*.¹⁴ Earlier on two herbal designations were in use, *stirps* and *simplex*. The first is a general term indicating stem, stalk or root, thought to be primary operative parts. The second is usually explained, if at all, as a herb singularly constituting a medicinal cure, or conversely a medicine consisting solely of one herb.¹⁵ The herbal known as the *Circa instans* defines a simple as "a cure as produced by nature"; however, according to Galen, a simple is a remedy which "produces effect in only one direction", as opposed to a compound, which could

¹⁴ Note that the entry in the *OED* dated 1516 is a bibliographical ghost; see chapter 3 on the printed herbal traditions.

¹⁵ Arber (1913), 6; Getz (1989), 60; Van Arsdall (2002), 84.

combine properties of several simples, or an antidote, which is helpful in one way but harmful in another.¹⁶ The Roman emperors already made use of this by building up a resistance to poisonous substances.¹⁷ The term *antidotarium*, used in the twelfth century, did not make it into general use. Earlier yet *φαρμακοποιεία* referred to both the working and making of herbal medicine. Natural philosophy mostly spoke of *ύλη*, a notoriously difficult word usually translated *materia* in Latin; the encyclopaedias speak of *virtus*, *proprietas*, *natura*, or, true to the Greek heritage, *dynamidia*. Nomenclature and synonyma will be seen to constitute an important part of all herbal literature.

2. Genre tradition

“Amongst the rest a small unsightly root, / But of divine effect, he cull'd me out;
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it, / But in another Countrey, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flowre, but not in this soyl ...
... He call'd it Hæmony, and gave it me, / And bade me keep it as of sovran use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp / Or gastly furies apparition;”
– John Milton, *Comus* 629-33, 638-41 (1634)

2.0. Introduction

In this chapter the traditions of the herbal genre are discussed. In its pre-literary origin practical uses of herbs are considered. This offers a reflection upon the core aspects of the genre and their reception in later times. In Mesopotamia and Egypt mixing of medicine with magic is discussed, as are Greek natural philosophy and Roman pharmacology, pagan folklore and Christian religion. These traditions are traced through the Middle Ages to the arbitrary boundary of the Renaissance, when the influence of humanist scientific thought on the contents of herbals marks a new period.

2.1. Oriental origins

“At vetus illa aetas, cui fecimus aurea nomen,
fetibus arboreis et, quas humus educat, herbis
fortunata fuit nec polluit ora cruore.”
– P. Ovidius Naso, *Metamorphoses* XV.96-98

But that old era which we did name “Golden”
was full in fruit of trees and home-grown herb
so that it did not stain the mouths with blood.
[My translation.]

Through their mutually dependent metabolisms human and plant life are in a perennial state of symbiosis. Long before laboratory analysis life-giving qualities of the herbal kingdom manifested itself to our predecessors through their primogenitors, the primates, and other members of the animal world. In a pre-Darwinian circle of life man might see the jay opening up with its beak the prickly bolster of a chestnut to reveal its inner nutrition, or the fearsome bear gently rubbing its mighty paw in no less prickly nettles to stay the bleeding of a freshly-inflicted spear gush.¹⁸ Of curiosity, or of necessity, these two complementary uses of feeding and healing must have found fast imitation. Soon the sampling of fruits, berries, nuts and leaves would have added improved resistance to the scurvy-wary meals of meat.¹⁹ In the process some samples would have shown to be beneficial, others obnoxious, detrimental, or lethal. Such results of persistent experimentation in the pre-literary period can only have been transmitted orally, father to son, mother to daughter,

¹⁶ Arnaldus de Villanova, *Aphorismi de gradibus* 15: [My translation.]

“Fallax medicus qui potens mederi simplicibus,
composita dolose aut frustra quaerit.”

It is a treacherous doctor who, being able to cure with simples,
looks for composite medicine to detriment or in vain.

¹⁷ Buck (1917), 316.

¹⁸ The animal as a physician is a frequent mediaeval theme also attested in Albertus Magnus; cf. Houwen (2004a), 19.

¹⁹ A recent article by Henry et.al. (2010) states that Neanderthals, c.40,000 BCE, already used plants for nourishment.

and so on. Thus it appears that the early designation, determination and description of plants go back to our ancestors' earliest beginnings. In the light of evolution the regimentary use of herbs, coupled with their medicinal uses, must take precedence to their aesthetic consideration. Only later, after the advent of agriculture around 10,000 BCE, can the cultivation of crops lead to such domestication of species as would nowadays be labelled botanical.²⁰ Stannard's contention that the herbal is "applied botany" is thus an anachronism;²¹ botany is rather "abstract herbalism".

Nowadays the cultivation, even the synthetic fabrication of resources allows a control of quality and dosage unthinkable in the early era. Nonetheless, the principal herbal properties were working as well then as now.²² Long dismissed as unscientific, modern science is slowly proving the old ways of trial and error.²³ Without knowing exact reasons of operation, many herbs used of old have anti-bacterial qualities, such as rosemary and sage. Others have a beneficial effect as anti-oxidants, such as berries. Still others either dilute or coagulate blood, a useful aid in frequent hazardous situations. Many of these uses have remained over the ages, if sometimes the rationale behind the use has been lost. In this context one might mention the use of make-up. The usage of herbs to prevent bleeding is proven for woad, the blue paint the Celtic tribes used in battle. The use of henna as a disinfectant is as old as Egypt, and not without cause attributed to prostitutes. In the same culture the anointing of the eyelid as seen in the pharaohs' tombs is originally a medical use of copper salt as an antioxidant.²⁴ The presence of poppy seeds in the same place also proves skill in soporific self-medication.²⁵ Without using the terminology, ancient medicine had already discovered alkaloids, antibiotics, antioxidants and astringents. In one specific case, a prohibition of iron as a tool for gathering, a practical precaution preventing the corrosion of medicinal acids, became a Druidic dogma.²⁶ Only in the eyes of the credulous does such practice turn to magic; to cite Singer's proverbial words, "the science of one age becomes the superstition of the next."²⁷

Curiously enough, for all remaining cave-paintings of animals, few plants have been the object of such depiction. Universally speaking, animals are closer to the human mind than plants are. When these do find their way into illustration in the early cultures of the Middle East, their representation is soon made schematic, as seen in Sumerian cuneiform or Egyptian hieroglyphs. Nevertheless, such symbols are readily understood for the things they reference by the native population perusing these pictorial signs. Compare the two-dimensional image of the four-leaf clover; not only is it immediately clear what it refers to, it also has common connotations on its particular uses. All that is needed for any pictogram to function is a consensus in society arising

²⁰ Arber (1953), 317.

²¹ Stannard (1977), 358.

²² Cf. Homeros, *Ilias*.11.514-5:

ἰητρὸς γὰρ ἀνὴρ πολλῶν ἀντάξιος ἄλλων
 ἰοὺς τ' ἐκτάμνειν ἐπὶ τ' ἤπια φάρμακα πάσσειν.

²³ Cf. Fernie (2009), 1: "Si vis curari, de morbo nescio quali Accipias herbam; sed quale nescio, nec quam Ponas: nescio quo; curabere, nescio quando." [My translation.] to apply, or where; when you shall heal, I know not.

²⁴ Cf. II Reg 9:30:

"Porro Jezabel, introitu ejus audito, depinxit oculos suos stibio, et ornavit caput suum, et respexit per fenestram."

²⁵ Cf. Homeros, *Odusseia* 4, 220-223:

αὐτίκ' ἄρ' εἰς οἶνον βάλε φάρμακον, ἔνθεν ἔπινον,
 νηπενθές τ' ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθον ἀπάντων.
 ὃς τὸ καταβρόξειεν, ἐπὴν κρητῆρι μίγειη,
 οὐ κεν ἐφημέριός γε βάλοι κατὰ δάκρυ παρειῶν.

²⁶ Greene (1909), I.122

²⁷ C. Singer (1928), 6.

[My translation.]

For a doctor is a man with the worth of many others in cutting out arrows and dispensing pleasant drugs.

If you want to be cured of what disease I know not, take this herb; but which one I know not, nor what

[My translation.]

Then Jezabel, having heard of his entry, painted her eyes with powder, adorned her head and looked out a window.

[My translation.]

Anon she cast into the wine they were drinking a drug, soothing and allaying, obliterating all the evils.

Whoever drinks of it, when mixed in the bowl, would not shed a tear down his cheeks all day.

out of the necessity to catalogue food reserves and trade goods. Given their central use to human health, it is small wonder that herbs were incorporated into the earliest writings. Through this medium the preservation of oral lore could be continued across generations and locations. The Chinese written tradition goes back to at least 2700 BCE, although the alleged texts of Shen Nung and Huang Ti have come to us in recensions not earlier than 200 BCE.²⁸ A Sumerian herbal of c.2200 BCE, mentioned in a later tablet now in the British Museum, is also lost.²⁹ Still, though, something of a medical practice is known from Mesopotamia in the form of the travelling herb doctors known as the *Hākim*, who also seem to have touched upon Indian medicinal traditions.³⁰

Through travel this Sumerian strand is continued into the better-documented Egyptian practises. Contacts between the two cultures led to the exchange of knowledge, just as it would for the Greek natural philosophers who came to Egypt. Likewise, in any dissemination of new information, the receiving culture will adopt what it can understand, and adapt what it cannot. This process is especially apt to medicine. The ability of plants to interfere in life and death is mystified easily enough when transmitted only orally; with writing another layer is interposed between the real herb and its eventual user. Herbal knowledge is not only personal experience, but also becomes a canon of texts, “ancillaries to [a] basic knowledge that has been acquired in practice from another.”³¹ As the ability to read has historically been limited, the patient would have held the able physician in an awe that borders on the religious. It is small wonder, then, that the Egyptian doctors were claimed to have obtained their power from the gods themselves.³² The accompanying social status might incite a physician to keep his procedures as private as possible, while the use of ceremony and ritual upheld a belief system shared by the whole society.³³ That such a system is common in traditional culture is confirmed by the work of Lévi-Strauss. In what he calls the “shamanistic complex” of native American culture, the actual efficacy of a remedy depends upon a social consensus between the people and their divine intermediary, the doctor.³⁴

Leyel said about the patients of the Egyptian physicians that “it was only because those treated by the priests did not understand even the rudiments of the wisdom that they regarded it as magic and called it so”.³⁵ The same thing could be said about our point of view: the modern mind may wonder at the workings of primitive medicine; but it must not be thought that it did not work at all. Clinical tests account for an efficacy of placebo medicine, even when it is said to be fake,³⁶ while laboratory analysis is still unable to explain all apparent properties of herbal products. For all things the Egyptians could not cure, and for which magic would seem an attractive substitute, they also had a reputation that was known to their neighbours; for Homer the Egyptian physician was “skilled above all others”.³⁷ Magic could be used for cases where no treatment was rationally available, just as religion used to explain phenomena that were not yet fully understood. Thus the

²⁸ Anderson (1977), 2.

²⁹ Le Strange (1977), xi.

³⁰ Budge (1928), 35.

³¹ Arber (1953), 424.

³² Cf. Sap 7:17-20:

“Ipse enim dedit mihi horum quæ sunt scientiam veram ... naturas animalium, et iras bestiarum, vim ventorum, et cogitationes hominum, differentias virgultorum, et virtutes radicum.”	[My translation.] For he gave me true knowledge of what is ... natures of animals, tempers of beasts, force of winds, thoughts of men, varieties of plants and virtues of roots
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³³ Cameron (1988), 201.

³⁴ Getz (1998), xi.

³⁵ Leyel (1943), 14.

³⁶ Cf. Kaptchuk (2010).

³⁷ Homeros, *Oduſſeia* 4.231-2:

ἡτρὸς δὲ ἕκαστος ἐπιστάμενος περὶ πάντων / ἀνθρώπων.	[My translation.] For every doctor is knowledgeable over all other men.
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physician visiting a patient was accompanied by an exorcist, removing the demons from the patient, and an interpreter, indicating the right time for healing. Still, significantly, the physician was the last in the row, building on his colleagues' jobs to practice his own skill. This often meant that the chanter of charms and the applier of plants were the same.³⁸ The tension is not between magic and medicine, but between spoken word and applied drug, as in verbal and material ritual charms. In Budge's summary, "when the devil had been expelled the herbal treatment began".³⁹ However, the efficacy of sympathetic suggestion to willing believers must not be underestimated.

Indeed, the herbal content of the Egyptian papyri can be viewed in either of two ways; as a practical achievement prompted by magical motives, as Dawson has it,⁴⁰ or as the imposition of ritual ceremony over a strand of natural lore. In this light Cameron distinguishes recipes that use magical elements in actions and those that use them in formulas.⁴¹ Nonetheless, after the ritual, or accompanying it, it still remains to apply the herbal treatment. A combination of oral formula and manual rite is clearly seen in the Ebers Papyrus (c.1550 BCE), which has miscellaneous magico-medical material such as recipes, charms and incantations. It even states at the start of the roll that "the magician and the medicine work together."⁴² Thus the matter is arranged to include the name of the ailment, the diagnosis of symptoms, as well as the preparation and administration of herbs. Moreover, pictures provide for the identification of the plants needed, though it must be said that the act is hard to accomplish by modern eyes. Thus not strictly a herbal proper, as it has not been ordered as such, the papyrus contains the practical knowledge of the medicinal uses of about 150 plants, including monographs on plants like rizinus and lotus. The rearrangement of material in itself much more venerable, and already present in the Smith Papyrus (c.2000 BCE), points to a written tradition based on an older natural lore. The fact that beneficial plants can be described as divine and bad ones as demons may be a religious veneer over a rational efficacious system. Still, in other cases, such as with the use of excrements for exorcism, the scales may go the other way.

Nonetheless, as Dawson says "the herbal had its origin in the collection of data from experience concerning the ascertained or imagined value of the drugs."⁴³ The presence of multiple remedies for the same malady shows that the physician was expected to make his own selection based on the specific situation, a practice continued by present-day herbalists.⁴⁴ That trial and error were involved is substantiated by the presence of weights and measures in the Egyptian papyri. Apart from the remedies, which, "devoid of any mystic meaning", are mostly herbal, skill in dissection is also displayed.⁴⁵ In the removal of organs to preserve the bodies of dignitaries, medicine and magic were again combined. This faculty was eagerly sought by the doctors of surrounding societies; and indeed it is known that Hippocrates, the father of Greek medicine, received part of his training in Egypt.⁴⁶ Travel was as essential to the ancient herbalist

³⁸ Fischer-Elfert (2005), 43.

³⁹ Budge (1928), 26.

⁴⁰ Dawson (1953), 48.

⁴¹ Cameron (1988), 195.

⁴² Fischer-Elfert (2005), 41.

⁴³ Dawson (1929), 51.

⁴⁴ Van Arsdall (2002), 84.

⁴⁵ Rohde (1922), 22; cf. Hom.*Il.*11.844-8:
 ἔνθα μιν ἔκτανύσας ἐκ μηροῦ τάμνε μαχαίρη
 ὄξυ βέλος περιπευκές, ἀπ' αὐτοῦ δ' αἷμα κελαινὸν
 νίζ' ὕδατι λιαρῶ, ἐπὶ δὲ ρίζαν βάλε πικρὴν
 χερσὶ διατρίψας ὀδυνήφατον, ἧ οἱ ἀπάσας
 ἔσχ' ὀδύνας: τὸ μὲν ἔλκος ἐτέρσετο, παύσατο δ' αἷμα.

⁴⁶ Budge (1928), 35.

[My translation.]

Lying there prostrate he cut from his side
 the sharp painful arrow, and washed the black blood
 from it with warm water, and cast on it a sharp root,
 having rubbed it in his hands, a painkiller that stays
 all pains; the wound dried, and the blood staunch.

to absorb and disseminate knowledge as it was to the seed of the plants they studied. That the line between Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece is unbroken is also shown by the *Asclepiadae*, the travelling herb-doctors in the tradition of the *Hākim*, who carried the same symbol, the staff of serpents. Originally belonging to the Sumerian god Ningishzida, this item found its way into the hands of the servants of the Egyptian scorpion-god Selker, who had power to dispel venom, of the Jew Moses, the Greco-Roman Asklepios and Hygieia, and up to the doctors of our age.⁴⁷ An example of man's mastery of nature, it represents the rebirth of nature as well as herbal medicine.

2.2. Greece and Rome

“Ille, ut depositi proferret fata parentis,
scire potestates herbarum usumque medendi
maluit et mutas agitare inglorius artis.”
– P. Vergilius Maro, *Aeneis* 12.395-7

To stall his dying father's fates, he sought
to know the powers and use of herbs to heal,
and stir the silent arts in lieu of praise.
[My translation.]

While, historically speaking, “there was no real separation of the practice of medicine by the physician from the gatherer of herbs”,⁴⁸ the separation of institutionalised medicine from folk herbalism in Egypt left its mark on both practices in Greece. The latter strand surfaces in the trade of the *ρίζοτομοι*, ‘root-diggers’, who, like their Egyptian predecessors, used calendars to know when to gather what they deemed the perennial plant parts.⁴⁹ The former group, forming schools of their own, have left more evidence of their existence, even if at the beginning they were on an island, literally speaking. Thales of Milete, in the sixth century BCE, transported the doctrine of humours, the four qualities of the body, into his own theory. Later refined in degrees by the Greek Galen from the promontory of Pergamon, the humoral pathology identified four temperaments in nature (derived from the four elements, water, fire, earth and wind), to wit sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric and melancholic, and defined disease as a humoral imbalance. The concepts of *similia similibus* and *contraria contrariis curantur*, where plants are assigned properties either alike or opposite specific diseases, derive indirectly from Egyptian sympathetic and contiguous magic.⁵⁰ Hippocrates of Cos, having visited Egypt as one of the *Asclepiadae* in the fifth century, founded a similar mode of medicine, based on a combination of observation and divine healing.⁵¹ Surviving in an apocryphal corpus of texts, one of the regimens states that “while calling on the gods a man should also himself co-operate with them”.⁵² At the same time, the votive plaques at the temple of Epidauros show that the idea of the gods protecting different body members, an Egyptian notion continuing to the time of the Latin *haruspex* and modified for the Christian relic market, had a wide sway over medicine. The early days of Greek medicine are thus a continuation of Egyptian magico-medical practices, combining an attention to diet, pharmacy and, if necessary, surgery.⁵³

⁴⁷ Fischer-Elfert (2005), 81; Buck (1917), 64.

⁴⁸ Matthews (1962), 1.

⁴⁹ Stoll (1995), 347; cf. Hom.*Od.*10, 302-6:

“ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας πόρε φάρμακον ἀργεῖφόντης
ἐκ γαίης ἐρύσας, καί μοι φύσιν αὐτοῦ ἔδειξε.
ρίζη μὲν μέλαν ἔσκε, γάλακτι δὲ εἴκελον ἄνθος:
μῶλυ δὲ μιν καλέουσι θεοί: χαλεπὸν δέ τ’ ὀρύσσειν
ἀνδράσι γε θνητοῖσι, θεοὶ δὲ τε πάντα δύνανται.

⁵⁰ Cameron (1988), 195.

⁵¹ This is not unlike prognostic texts in Anglo-Saxon times; cf. Chardonnens (2007), 161, 255.

⁵² Jones (1953), 101.

⁵³ Cf. Pindaros, *Pythian Odes* 3.50-53:

... λύσαις ἄλλον ἀλλοίων ἀχέων

[My translation.]

Having thus spoken [Hermes] handed to me the herb,
drawn from the earth, and indicated to me its nature.
At the root it was black, but its flower was like milk.
Moly the gods name it; it is difficult to dig for mortal
men; but the gods are capable of all.

[My translation.]

... he freed and removed each from their own anguish,

It is not until the Hellenists that a tradition of its own emerges in the Greek-speaking world.⁵⁴ Here as well it is travel that brings about the new ways. Theophrastus, a pupil of Aristotle, writing *Περὶ φυτῶν ἱστορία* and *Περὶ φυτῶν αἰτιῶ* c.350 BCE inspected the local flora on the isle of Lesbos and noted differences with the Egyptian region. Although describing about 500 plants, a third for the first time, the treatise is mostly theoretical philosophy on the souls of plants, so that it was not widely used in the Middle Ages, nor was his division of plant life into trees, shrubs and herbs.⁵⁵ While firmly based in Egyptian practice, the usability of such theory, separating science from its more practical purpose, was limited in the area of medicine. A pseudo-Aristotelian text *De plantis* is nowadays attributed to Nicolaus of Damascus; a more practical classification, around the same time, in the *Ριζοτομικόν* by Diocles of Euboea has not survived.⁵⁶ The two Peripatetics would go on to be the tutors of Alexander the Great, later conqueror of nearly the entire Near East. In his wake came a host of scientists who documented, among other things, the new-found flora. Their work was used to found a new medical school at Alexandria after 332 BCE.⁵⁷ From this time, the description and the depiction of medicinal plants reached new heights at the expense of natural philosophy, and its use in utilitarian medicine is seen in such herbalists as Crateuas (c.100 BCE), said to be the father of botanical illustration, which has unfortunately not survived in originals.⁵⁸

The full synthesis of this tradition was provided by Dioscurides (c.60 CE) in his *Περὶ ὕλης ἰατρικῆς*. Similar to the Eastern herbals, including the one in Babylon c.700, he renders the names, synonyms, description and use of herbs. With Hippocrates he shares 130 out of c.400 items. From Theophrastus he borrowed a classification based on natural correspondence. For the illustrations Crateuas is the source; some of them have only come down to us in later versions. On top of this Dioscurides, being an army surgeon, travelled to the native habitat of many plants, as he says, “knowing most herbs with mine own eyes,” arranging them by variety.⁵⁹ A contemporaneous compilation is Pliny the Elder’s *Naturalis Historia* (before 79 CE), whose books XII to XXVII touch upon plants in a proto-encyclopaedic fashion, giving descriptions from various sources but also relating his own experience as a traveller and an army officer.⁶⁰ The first eight books can be said to be botanical, while the second eight are particularly medicinal.⁶¹ Within the chapters his information is mostly ordered alphabetically, without any illustrations. Although Diocles and Crateuas are mentioned, the name Dioscurides is conspicuously absent. The accusation against Pliny of superstition may similarly be relegated to his sources, but one should remember that the dividing line between medicine and magic may not be drawn rigidly from a classical perspective. Of magic, Pliny says, “the fact that it first originated in medicine no one entertains a doubt.”⁶²

The elaboration of a theoretical background would not have mattered much to the core of

ἔξαγεν, τοὺς μὲν μαλακαῖς ἐπαιδαῖς ἀμφέπων,
τοὺς δὲ προσανέα πίνοντας, ἢ γυίοις περάπτων πάντοθεν
φάρμακα, τοὺς δὲ τομαῖς ἔστασεν ὀρθοῦς.

enveloping some of them with soft spells,
some with soothing potions, or applying to their limbs
drugs on every side and others he set right with surgery

⁵⁴ Nissen (1966), 5: “Das botanische Interesse selbst war zwar bereits durch den Alexanderzug mächtig geweckt.“

⁵⁵ Riddle (1974), 161.

⁵⁶ Schulze (2002), 7.

⁵⁷ Le Strange (1977), xi.

⁵⁸ Arber (1911), 1.

⁵⁹ Blunt (1979), 16.

⁶⁰ C. Plinius Secundus Maior, *Naturalis historia* 27.1.3:

“... inmensa Romanae pacis maiestate non homines modo diversis
inter se terris gentibusque, verum etiam montes et excedentia in
nubes iuga partusque eorum et herbas quoque invicem ostentante.”

⁶¹ Morton (1986), 90.

⁶² Bonser (1953), 154.

[My translation.]

by the huge benevolence of the *pax Romana*,
not just men of all lands and peoples, but also
mountains, clouds and plants are interchanged

herb-gatherers in whose practice folk-lore was much more important. In Roman times this body of verbal wisdom had become entangled with the necessary superstitions, especially in gathering and administrating the herbs, where the blessing of the gods was often invoked. As the causes of disease were either ignored or unknown, the best remedy would be obtained supernaturally. The use of witchcraft, either white and benevolent or black and malevolent, is explicitly linked to the old herb-wives of rural communities. However, this magical layer does not invalidate the efficacy of the herbs themselves as proven over the ages. Furthermore, the fact that folk-lore has remained an alternative to institutional medicine to the present day means it must have some merits.⁶³ The absence of a deduction from theory does not deny the “rural empiric” the possibility of induction from the established benefits of herbs.⁶⁴ The same can be said of the healers of old England. Their insistence upon ritual in the materials and times of a harvest, the prohibition of iron as well as the importance of the sun and moon, does not detract from a basic applicability of herbal knowledge. For the druids, as much as for Egyptian physicians, healing was intertwined with religion; Pliny even says that the rites of the Britons reminded him of those of the Persians and the Sumerians.⁶⁵ Like them, magic was not practised *für sich*, but as a means to ensure the welfare of society; only the rite accompanying healing is magic. It will be seen that Christianity is not too different here.⁶⁶

A last proponent of the classical lore is Galen (second century CE), whose refinements to the Hippocratean humoral doctrine have been mentioned. In addition to the four temperaments of sanguine (hot and moist), phlegmatic (cold and moist), choleric (hot and dry) and melancholic (cold and dry) in human humours, each plant could have a similar quality in a degree between one (mild) and four (extreme), also based on perceived properties of similarity and contiguity. Though travelling widely as a surgeon and physician, and trained in vivisection in Alexandria, Galen and his artificial theories lift the medical profession to a higher plane, removed from its herbal upbringings.⁶⁷ The doctrine of humours rationalised a natural efficacy that was known yet hardly understood.⁶⁸ His *pharmacopoieia* can hardly be called more than an alphabetical drug list, giving only the name of a plant accompanied by a picture and a brief account of its usage. Although this would have been enough for a remedy to remain useful, a wide divergence came into place between practice and theory. This is not all too different, however, from the Egyptian system. A ritualised lore, in this case humoralist, was superimposed over practical application. As a result, an uneducated leech may not have understood the scientific basis of his practices; still, local doctors in developing countries show that even without theory, contrary to Singer’s beliefs, “rational remedies can be applied”.⁶⁹ The one danger of a system transmitted purely in practice, in effect, is that it is unable to analyse unknown conditions. This is indeed the accusation of late Roman medicine, in that it is reduced in the hands of its successors to mere valetudinarianism. According to Celsus, an Epicurean opposer of Christianity, *optimum medicamentum quies est*.⁷⁰

Ironically, it is the Christians who are normally blamed for a lax attitude towards the physician’s practice. In promoting spiritual health and divine healing through saints and relics,

⁶³ Scragg (1989), 27.

⁶⁴ Rubin (1974), 106.

⁶⁵ Rohde (1922), 8.

⁶⁶ Cf. Is 38:21 (cf. also the *Circa instans*):
“Et iussit Isaias ut tollerent massam de ficis,
et cataplasmarent super vulnus, et sanaretur.”

⁶⁷ Jones (1953), 373.

⁶⁸ Lie (1993), 211.

⁶⁹ Singer (1927), 29.

⁷⁰ A. Cornelius Celsus, *De medicina* V.26.28.

[My translation.]

And Isaiah ordered that a mass of figs be taken, and applied as a poultice to the wound, and he be healed.

the superstitions of the Roman *haruspex* and the Egyptian diviner are recalled. It is forgotten that Scripture is full of physicians; Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus, is especially kind to its leeches.⁷¹ God created herbs for the benefit of man, and the doctor is endowed with their knowledge.⁷² However, Getz says, humanity's first sin comprised "eating the wrong thing."⁷³ After the Fall, healing was necessary to counter the effects of the outside. As the body is the plan of God, taking care of it is advocated by Christ and the apostles.⁷⁴ Moreover, medicine constitutes an act of mercy, as well as an opportunity for spiritual guidance.⁷⁵ Thus, the use of prayer and potions, suspiciously pagan in origin, go hand in hand in Christian healing.⁷⁶ Christianity, as much as other religions, did not try to eradicate existing tradition, embracing what it could use to ease the pagan populace into faith, just as the birth of Christ coincides with a feast of new light (Lucia) and the evergreen tree. As in Egypt, prayers for divine intervention may have been used most when standard treatment failed. With the gathering of herbs, too, a superstructure of religious rites continued the pagan practice.⁷⁷ While the use of heathen formulas was nominally forbidden, e.g. by Archbishop Egbert of York, it was not wrong to call on Christ's blessing.⁷⁸ Charms are especially multifaceted; many of them are regular medicine which has "put on a rustic dress",⁷⁹ others magic that is a remnant of regular medicine.⁸⁰ Thus the rural empiric has been incorporated into written or quasi-learned tradition.⁸¹

This written tradition attained fixed characteristics in the later Latin transmissions. A number of Latin recensions of Dioscurides appear, alphabeticised in contents and illustrated.⁸² Such instruments reflect the flexibility of the herbal genre, adapting practical arts to its benefit.⁸³ Extracts also appear, such as the *Liber ex herbis femininis* or the *Curae herbarum* (fourth century CE).⁸⁴ Around the same time extracts from Pliny entered into an anonymous *Herbarium Apuleii*,

⁷¹ Sir 38:1: [My translation.]

"Honora medicum propter necessitatem: etenim illum creavit Altissimus." (Honour thy doctor: for God created him).

⁷² Gn 1:29: "Ecce dedi vobis omnem herbam afferentem semen super terram, et universa ligna quæ habent in semetipsis sementem generis sui, ut sint vobis in escam."

Behold, I gave you every herb bearing its seed on earth, and each tree that has its seed inside, so that they be food to you. [My translation.]

⁷³ Getz (1989), 85.

⁷⁴ Ps 104:13-15:

"Rigans montes de superioribus suis; de fructu operum tuorum satiabitur terra: producens fœnum jumentis, et herbam servituti hominum, ut educas panem de terra, et vinum lætificet cor hominis."

[My translation.]

Flooding hills from above, the soil will be full of the fruit of your toils giving grass for cattle, herbs for men, bread and wine to still the heart

⁷⁵ Ziegler (1998), 268.

⁷⁶ Sir 38:9-11:

"... ora Dominum, et ipse curabit te ... Da suavitatem et memoriam similaginis, et impingua oblationem, et da locum medico." an offer of fine flour and fat and give place to the leech

[My translation.]

⁷⁷ Cf. *The vertuous book of distillation* (L. Andrewe 1527):

Lerne the hygh and meruelous vertue of herbes..how moch it excedeth to use medecyne of efycacye naturall by God ordeyned then wicked wordes or charmes of efycacye unnaturall by dyuell enuent'd.

⁷⁸ Rohde (1922), 37; Cameron (1988), 214.

⁷⁹ Van Arsdall (2002), 42.

⁸⁰ Rubin (1974), 112.

⁸¹ Brévar (2008), 36.

⁸² Cf. C. Plinius Secundus Maior, *Naturalis historia*:

... pictures are deceitful; also, in representing such a number of colours, and especially expressing the lively hew of hearbs according to their nature as they grow, no marvcile if they that limned and drew them out, did faile and degenerat from the first pattern and original; besides, they came far short of the marke, setting out hearbes as they did at one only season (to wit, either in the flourc, or in seed time) for they change and after their forme and shape event-quarter of the year. Hereof it came, that all the rest laboured to describe their forms and colours, by words onely.

⁸³ Mäkinen (2004), 170.

⁸⁴ Collins (1999), 148.

ascribed to the author and Aesculapian priest L. Apuleius.⁸⁵ Other texts are soon attached to these famous works, such as *De herba vettonica* by ps.-Antonius Musa and Sextus Placitus's *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* (sixth century CE).⁸⁶ These recensions show a state of textual transmission in which the original oral lore is compressed or concised. The descriptions of plants, as well as their illustrations, have their basis in writing and are thus further removed from nature. Still, such texts would have served their purpose to gather and administer herbs. Since information is not given in full, the user needs to rely on his or her own knowledge, and this is indeed how herbalism works to this day; the available body of texts is a mere extract of an oral lore that is passed on through apprenticeship, and new knowledge in texts may stem from experiments done independently of literature.⁸⁷ A good example of this, Marcellus of Bordeaux, called Empiricus (around 400 CE), included folk-lore, such as pagan charms, with his own experience of gathering medicinal herbs, and a discussion of synonyma.⁸⁸ This is not to say that there was no superstition. Use of amulets, based on contact medicine from Egypt, passed from pagan to Christian practice as a pandect, a potent cure even when worn around the neck.⁸⁹ Today, some still sport metal four-leaf clovers.

2.3. Middle Ages

“Eins in allem und alles im Einen / Gottes Bild auf Kräutern und Steinen.”

– Novalis (ps. Georg Ph. Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg), *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802)

Eventually, it is almost exclusively in the monasteries where medical book knowledge in the early Middle Ages is to be found. At least since the Benedictine Rule, monks were obliged to take care of the surrounding population, spiritually and corporeally.⁹⁰ Alternatively, an attendant could be assigned from outside the community; that is, a lay physician.⁹¹ On rolls of monastic payment these practitioners feature prominently.⁹² Elsewhere doctors were themselves clerics, mediating herbal folk-lore and spiritual regulations.⁹³ With the cloister's *infirmarius* it would be decided which herbs to grow in the monastery garden. This semblance of Paradise, from the Persian word for an enclosure, and as such described in a seventh-century Babylonian herbal, was carefully cultivated and supplied by the lay trader.⁹⁴ Thus this Christian form of hospitality, later to be the hospital, actually stimulated drug traffic.⁹⁵ Though priests may have been herbalists, surgery was most often left to the laity. Albertus Magnus in the twelfth century considered academic medicine separate from church practice.⁹⁶ The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 CE had already compelled

⁸⁵ Voigts (1978), 227.

⁸⁶ De Vriend (1972), xiv.

⁸⁷ Riddle (1974), 161.

⁸⁸ Van Arsdall (2002), 71-2.

⁸⁹ Greene (1909), 144; Rohde (1922), 27.

⁹⁰ *Regula Benedicti*, C.36 [My emphasis]:

“Infirmorum cura ante omnia et super omnia adhibenda est, ut sicut revera Christo ita eis serviat... Quibus fratribus infirmis sit cella super se deputata et *servitor timens Deum* et diligens ac sollicitus.”

⁹¹ Talbot (1967), 44.

⁹² Getz (1989), 10.

⁹³ Brévar (2008), 34.

⁹⁴ Morton (1981), 3; cf. Gen 2:8:

“Plantaverat autem Dominus Deus paradisum voluptatis a principio, in quo posuit hominem quem formaverat.”

⁹⁵ Riddle (1974), 164.

⁹⁶ Ziegler (1988), 5.

[My translation.]

Most of all care must be taken of the sick as if Christ himself were served; for whom a room be assigned and a tidy, *God-fearing attendant*.

[My translation.]

And the lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure in the beginning, where he put man whom he had created.

physicians to summon a priest before delicate procedures.⁹⁷ It also forbade the practice of surgery by the clergy. By the next century, medicine had moved out of the hands of the Church, and into the lay hospital practice. This is not to say that medicine became a matter for the illiterate. The existence of literature in both Latin and the vernacular prove that medicinal knowledge was often widely dispersed.⁹⁸ With this specialisation of lay training came a divorce of the physician from both the surgeon and the herb-dealer, while the clergy returned to the primary ecclesiastic duties. What remained in the hands of the monk, however, was the encyclopaedia, ultimately going back to the *Etymologiarum sive originum libri viginti* by the sixth-century Bishop of Seville, Isidore.

In Isidore many elements of the herbal during the later Middle Ages are foreshadowed. The *Etymologiae* can be considered an encyclopaedia for all intents and purposes, comprising the whole of human knowledge on God's creation, from its cosmogenesis to the plant kingdom, and everything inbetween. In the vein of Adam, who was the first to name animals and plants, Isidore and his successors based their definition on the perceived etymology of the term used.⁹⁹ Thus the bear, *ursus*, licks its children into shape orally, *ore suo*, as though they are sculpted, *orsus*.¹⁰⁰ The use of multiple, seemingly contradictory derivations only showed the richness of God's plan. This predilection for etymology is mirrored by an attention to nomenclature in mediaeval herbals. As knowledge spread West over the Mediterranean world, a new need for names sparked synonymy. In herbal literature a plant known from older sources could be given a new name in a different locality; conversely, the same name could be reused for varieties that were not actually related. This Babylonian confusion can already be found in an Akkadian herbal of c.700 BCE, translated from the obsolescent Sumerian tongue. As the herbal travelled to Egypt, Greece, Rome and the Western world, synonymy became a necessary area in itself to reveal what exotic herb resembled what native plant. After all, the flora and fauna of the Mediterranean are hardly akin to Northern territories. Although the conquests of Alexander, the Romans, the Goths and the Crusades had helped spread the word about, and possibly the plants themselves, the word was not universally understood. The usual solution was, however, more often of a philological than biological nature.

Early mediaeval testimonies attest to this textual tendency. The tradition of Dioscurides is obscured by the problems of translating a systematic Greek herbal to alphabetical Latin abstracts. As classical authority was put on a pedestal after the fall of Rome, it became more customary to comment on one's predecessor than to write of one's own observation. Even if experience was gained, it needed to be reconciled with traditional testimony, which in turn became more and more derivative on every successive citation. Exotic herbs, their names unintelligibly butchered, were replaced by such specimens as were available locally, giving rise to a large literature on herbal *quid pro quo*.¹⁰¹ The same can be said of illustration: with notable exceptions, such as the above-mentioned Dioscurides codex, most images were copied crudely in ever-deteriorating qualities and contexts.¹⁰² Many mediaeval herbals became mere glossaries stating their synonyms and bare descriptions. However, it should be emphasised that these texts were still operating true

⁹⁷ *Concilium Lateranense Quartum*, 22:

“... praecipimus medicis corporum ut cum eos ad infirmos vocari contigerit ipsos ante omnia moneant et inducant quod medicos advocent animarum.”

⁹⁸ Getz (1989), 35.

⁹⁹ Cf. Gn 2:19 [My translation]:

“Omne enim quod vocavit Adam animæ viventis ipsum est nomen eius.”-whate'er Adam called a creature is its name.

¹⁰⁰ Isidorus Hispalensis episcopi, *Etymologiae* 12.22.

¹⁰¹ Givens (1989), 117.

¹⁰² Stannard (1969), 216.

[My translation.]

We prescribe for doctors of the body when they chance to be called to the sick, before all they admonish and induce them to call for doctors of the soul.

to their original use. As has been mentioned, text and illustration were merely a guidance for oral herbal knowledge; if their depiction became cruder in time, more information was required from the reader. Images are, according to Van Arsdall, “frozen cross-sections of a moving stream.”¹⁰³ Likewise, the elaborate etymologies were not an academic exercise into plant philosophy, but rather a means to come to a close identification in a long and complicated textual tradition.¹⁰⁴

Moreover, botanical interests are not at all absent in early mediaeval written culture. Plans survive of the Sankt Gallen monastery garden in Carolingian times, stating the names of plants and their mode of acquisition from foreign sources. Similar trade contacts surround the “physic garden” of the ninth-century Anglo-Saxon king Alfred.¹⁰⁵ In the Germanic tradition this botanical predilection was cultivated in Strabo’s *Hortulus* of c.840 CE. Around the same time the German Hrabanus Maurus wrote on plants in his *De rerum naturis*. After him two more abbots spread the special German seeds of original herbal literature. One of them, Hildegard of Bingen, wrote down her *Physica* c.1150. Its sources have not been adequately investigated; however, her descriptions appear partly based on her own observation.¹⁰⁶ Another proponent of German monastic herbals is Albertus Magnus’ *De vegetabilibus libri VII*, based on the pseudo-Aristotelean text *De plantis* by Nicolaus Damascenus, c.100 CE. Although Albertus’ philosophical nature inclined him to “the causes of the differences which appear in plants and not enumerate their differences one plant at a time”, an alphabetical list of plants is included in the sixth book; which may be based in part on his own observations.¹⁰⁷ Around Albertus’ death in 1280, the Italian Rufinus composed a *Virtutes herbarum*, an original work containing, alongside synonyms and descriptions, a personal affinity with flora.¹⁰⁸ It is unnecessary to wait for the Renaissance in order to find fresh interest in nature.

After the fall of Rome c.476 CE, the Classical plant lore also informed the Arabic spheres. Nestorian Christians, fleeing from orthodox Constantinople, settled in the south, bringing with them books which were incorporated into Arabic culture. In the case of medicine, this meant a reinforcement of the tradition of the Alexandrian school. One example is Isaac, who compiled from Hippocrates and Galen the influential *Isagoge*.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, Arab versions of Dioscurides circulated in the ninth century.¹¹⁰ All this later resurfaced in the Southern parts of Spain and Sicily, reintroducing there the West-Roman heritage. Mesue the Elder, Isaac’s teacher, had his works printed as early as 1471, followed two years later by the *Pandecta* of his ninth-century contemporary, Serapion the Elder. Other important names often mentioned in the manuscripts include Rhases, Haly Abbas, and Avicenna. The first wrote the *Almansor* c.900; the second the *Practica* c.950. Both these works were surmounted by Avicenna’s *Canon*, written around 1000. Translations from the Arabic by Constantinus Africanus, c.1070, heavily influenced the medical school at Salerno; Silvaticus’ *Opus pandectarum medicinae* is reminiscent of the *Pandectae* of Serapion.¹¹¹ The best-known Salernitan book, Platearius’ *Circa instans*, c.1150, has already been mentioned. Accurate in its overview of nomenclature and in its estimation of Classical and Arabic theories, the text is also known as the *Secreta Salernitanis* or *Liber de simplicibus medicinis*.¹¹²

¹⁰³ Van Arsdall (2002), 84.

¹⁰⁴ Stannard (1977), 365.

¹⁰⁵ Voigts (1979), 257.

¹⁰⁶ Fehring (1994), 228.

¹⁰⁷ Reeds (1988), 8; cf. Walsh (1920), 14: *Experimentum solum certificat in talibus* [Only experiment can validate it.]

¹⁰⁸ Thorndike (1932), 64.

¹⁰⁹ Talbot (1967), 25.

¹¹⁰ Collins (1999), 32.

¹¹¹ Stannard (1969), 217.

¹¹² Blunt (1979), 61.

2.4. Renaissance

“I do remember an apothecary,--
And hereabouts he dwells,--which late I noted
In tatter'd weeds, with overwhelming brows,
Culling of simples;” - William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* V.1 (c.1591-1595)

The advent of the printing press coincides with the rise of the Renaissance and the herbals of the humanist era. At the same time, manuscript production was still prolific in the sixteenth century, with herbals continuing to be copied from exemplars. Furthermore, some of the books were more mediaeval in content than the late manuscripts had been, while humanist adherence to the original sources could stifle their critical examination.¹²⁶ Often enough, a Renaissance print was based on mediaeval rather than early modern manuscripts. However, in the wake of Reformation theory, it became customary to view the properties of plants from a new perspective. In humanist hands, the herbal moved away from being a medicinal manual and started to belong more to botany and natural history, even if superstitions were never shed completely.¹²⁷ Again, throughout the history of herbalism, change comes through travel, not just of rediscovered book-rolls, but also of people and plants. Increased trade between city-states brought exotic herbs and spices to be dried, stored and examined in herbaria. In rediscovering the original Dioscurides and Pliny the humanists were encouraged to compare depictions of Mediterranean flora with their own.¹²⁸ The determination of plants for science rather than just for medicine led to a pre-Linnaean system of nomenclature, and also facilitated the separation of botany from the *pharmacopoieia* still in use in the pharmacies.¹²⁹

A change from pharmacology to botany also brings about a change in mode of illustration. Many mediaeval manuscripts derive their images ultimately from Dioscurides or Crateuas.¹³⁰ As these were copied crudely, the quality deteriorated over time unless reinforced by original sources from different traditions, such as the Arabic authors, or from natural observation. They functioned as formalised images representing plants that are known to the reader.¹³¹ In the later Middle Ages, comparison of classical sources occurred mostly in a textual context. In humanist hands, though, description and depiction of plants served the appreciation of nature rather than the identification of their literary offshoot, removed from its origins. Yet the process was already under way in the drawings in the *Tractatus de herbis* of c.1300;¹³² in Italy illustrations by De'Grassi c.1400 could be called naturalistic,¹³³; the same is said of those in Rinio's *Liber de simplicibus*, c.1420.¹³⁴ The English equivalents of these new images are found in two related volumes, Ashmole 1504 and the Helmingham Herbal, datable to the first half of the sixteenth century.¹³⁵ All of these considerably antedate the conventional candidate of the new naturalist illustration, the 1530 *Herbarum vivae eicones* by Brunfels. Ironically, the text of the early Renaissance herbals was little improvement over that of the manuscripts from which they distanced themselves; even Gesner's monumental

¹²⁶ Nissen (1966), 244.

¹²⁷ Stannard (1974), 30; cf. Ogilvie (2006), 1, who boldly claims “Natural history was invented in the Renaissance”.

¹²⁸ Reeds (1988), 27.

¹²⁹ Arber (1917), 224.

¹³⁰ De Vriend (1972), xiv.

¹³¹ Stannard (1969), 212.

¹³² Collins (2003), 13.

¹³³ Pächt (1950), 15.

¹³⁴ Blunt (1979), 69.

¹³⁵ Barker (1988), 55.

encyclopaedia (1551) can be considered a mostly mediaeval affair.¹³⁶ For all their virtues, the humanist prints could not compare in popularity to mediaeval best-sellers such as the 1481 *Herbarium Apulei* or the *Hortus Sanitatis* family in the first half of the sixteenth century.¹³⁷

On the topic of rare herbal illustrations, no survey would be complete without mentioning the Voynich manuscript, named after its rediscoverer in the early twentieth century. Thought to be made by Roger Bacon in the mid-thirteenth century, it was acquired c.1600 by Emperor Rudolph II. Written in an unknown, still largely undeciphered script are descriptions of herbs and potions, celestial and human bodies; at least, judging by the equally unusual accompanying illustrations. Given the contents of pharmacy, astrology and alchemy, the book has been deemed a manual for making an elixir of life, with which Roger Bacon had indeed been active.¹³⁸ Through the work of Brumbaugh, however, it has been shown that the text is of a much later date, perhaps c.1500. This appears to be corroborated by an analysis of the botanical section. Although the images appear as alien, as though they were consciously altered in appearance, some of them have been identified as real species such as thistle, mustard, sunflower and pepper.¹³⁹ On the basis of his cipher code, Brumbaugh has added names of papaver, paprika and mandrake.¹⁴⁰ Interestingly, some of these plants are from the New World, putting the date of the manuscript after they were first described around c.1493. Be this as it may, a large part of the picture is apparently an alphabetical herbal, accompanied by images of alchemy and astrology, and made at the threshold of the Renaissance.

The mixing of alchemy and astrology in the herbal is indeed an attested, if not an arrested development within humanism. Of course, the two *materiae* had already made the mark from the thirteenth century, and, like herbals, both derive from early Egyptian or Greek practises. Alchemy arrived in Western Europe as a coagulation of Greek and Arab (Al + *Χημία* / *χημεία*) attested from the thirteenth century through Albertus Magnus and Arnaldus de Villa Nova. Its main herbal uses consist of their distillation in water or their extraction into oils. The *Secretum secretorum*, often attributed to Albertus, is especially influenced by alchemy.¹⁴¹ Astrology originally governed the gathering of herbs; it also informed the humoralist doctrines of Galen, and, with the rise of Arab surgery, the industry of bloodletting. A lay doctor could carry around a small strip of astrological divinations, reminding him of his maxim *primo purgare*.¹⁴² Some plants could be said to possess magiferous functions only in the light of the right stars.¹⁴³ With the rise of science such sixteenth-century figures as Paracelsus popularised a mixture of these *materiae*, speeding up the separation of the old herbal from the new botany.¹⁴⁴ The new course for the alchemical or astrological herbal was inlaid with the archaic doctrine of signatures, stating that the internal properties of plants are determined by their outward appearance.¹⁴⁵ It is telling that two proponents of this theory so far removed from its herbal origins, Bulleyn and Culpeper, are still revered by students of simples.¹⁴⁶

British contributions to herbals, however, are not at all restricted to later generations. Already in the Anglo-Saxon era there are a number of compilations from continental sources,

¹³⁶ Houwen (Forthcoming a), 2.

¹³⁷ Stannard (1974), 30.

¹³⁸ Brumbaugh (1975), 348.

¹³⁹ O'Neill (1978), 79.

¹⁴⁰ Brumbaugh (1974), 548.

¹⁴¹ Voigts (1984), 320; cf. Steele (1898), Manzalaoui (1977).

¹⁴² Robbins (1970), 395.

¹⁴³ Stannard (1977), 33.

¹⁴⁴ Collins (1999), 278.

¹⁴⁵ Riddle (1974), 164; Hunt (1989a), xlix.

¹⁴⁶ Fernie (2009), 20.

mixed with an indigenous strand.¹⁴⁷ Middle English herbal translations have a similar status, being in the main based on the big books of Latin lore. *Macer* alone was Englished on several occasions, once by John Lelamour c.1373 in prose, but also as an anonymous verse version;¹⁴⁸ furthermore the *Tretys of diverse herbis* and the *Vertues off herbes* appear to be derivations.¹⁴⁹ In the late-fourteenth century *Circa instans* also arrived in England with multiple masks, from *Agnus castus* to *De simplicibus medicinis*.¹⁵⁰ Importantly, most of these versions are not literal translations, but rather reworking of one text conflated with others; John Trevisa's 1398 *On the properties of things* excerpted from Bartholomaeus' encyclopaedia is an exception. There are two Henries in herbals: Henry of Huntingdon based his on *Macer* c.1130, the expanded text of which formed the basis of Henry Daniel's herbal c.1380;¹⁵¹ from the latter are also attested rosemary treatises.¹⁵² The two herbal houses of *Macer* and *Agnus castus* continued life in print, published in 1477 and 1478 respectively.¹⁵³ In England the two texts return as *Banckes's Herbal* and the *Grete Herball*, first printed 1525 resp. 1526; only Trevisa had been printed before. The mediaeval items were "swept from the market" after 1560 by William Turner's herbal;¹⁵⁴ with this author, forming the first original herbal in English, we are already entering into the early Renaissance.

In the first century of printing, though, a complicated picture emerges. Between c.1450 and 1550 manuscript transmissions in both Latin and the vernacular still form a growth market. On the continent as well, the publication of printed herbals is relatively common from the 1470s onwards.¹⁵⁵ There are even continental prints catered especially for the English market. However, apart from Trevisa's translation c.1495, no herbal is printed in England before 1525. In the next thirty-five years, a large number of printed herbals are suddenly issued, but they disappear just as quickly c.1560, when Turner and his successors have taken the stage.¹⁵⁶ Looking at manuscript as well as printed compilations, both alchemy and astrology attempt to acquire a place in the herbal context. As a result, no two texts are ever really the exact same, and few printed versions ever go back to just one manuscript source, if the process is not reversed. At a time of Reformation and a returning to the roots, there is also an adherence to literal truth in operation. Scientific discovery must be reconciled with religious reverence on the one hand, with folklorist beliefs on the other. Every herbal text is a mix of pharmacy and physic, to be used by academia and the laity alike. It is necessary to discern the strands by which the late-mediaeval English herbal has travelled, and as a starting-point the major manuscript transmission from this century must now be described.

3. Manuscript and printed transmission

"There is, however, a closely related plant—wild sweet pea, *Hedysarum mackenzii*—that is very difficult to distinguish from wild potato, grows beside it, and is poisonous. In all likelihood McCandless mistakenly ate some seeds from the wild sweet pea and became gravely ill."

– Jon Krakauer, *Death of an innocent* (1993)

¹⁴⁷ Rohde (1922), 2.

¹⁴⁸ Voigts (1984), 317.

¹⁴⁹ Keiser (2008b), 298.

¹⁵⁰ Brodin (1950), 16.

¹⁵¹ Rigg (2003), 224.

¹⁵² Voigts (1984), 317.

¹⁵³ Frisk (1949), 14.

¹⁵⁴ Webster (1979), 248.

¹⁵⁵ Klebs (1938), 81; cf. Houwen (2004a), 17.

¹⁵⁶ Johnson (1944), 260.

3.0. Introduction

The overview of the herbal genre as sketched in the previous chapter can only be corroborated by looking at the actual witnesses of herbal texts. The manuscripts of the Latin, German and Dutch predecessors of English herbals are first singled out. The rise of vernacular literacy in the later Middle Ages is adduced to account for the multitude of mediaeval medical manuscripts. Note is made of user and producer of medicinal volumes, with due attention to the different practitioners of medicine. The overlap between medical texts and related *artes* genres is investigated further in the multilingual manuscript miscellany context, to come to an understanding of herbal manuscript transmissions in mediaeval England in the period 1400–1600. This chapter also traces the printed transmissions which go back to the aforementioned manuscripts. Biographies and bibliographies of printers, as well as their founts, are checked for copies of herbals. Similarities and differences between manuscripts and prints are discussed in the way the materials are produced and used, or how texts are compiled and put to the page, in order to see the transition between the two media. An inventory of late Middle English herbals in manuscript and print is appended and referenced.

3.1. Continental manuscripts

The previous chapter has shown that the late Middle English herbal takes its place in a tradition that spans a considerable stretch of time and space. The manuscripts containing the herbal texts embody these developments in the genre. Since “most Middle English texts are translations of or are derived from Latin”,¹⁵⁷ it is useful in the investigation of the English herbal to compare it to its continental counterparts. First mention must be made of the Dioscurides tradition, of which the original is no more extant. There is some discussion whether it was illustrated or not. Nissen takes a negative stance, saying that the pictorial tradition stems from Crateuas, who himself builds on the Egyptians texts.¹⁵⁸ However, the first witness we have, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Med.Gr. I, known as the Juliana Anicia Codex of c.512, is lavishly illustrated and alphabetically arranged.¹⁵⁹ Of the Greek tradition only its images survive along the text of the *Tractatus de herbis* treatises;¹⁶⁰ the Latin *Dyascorides*, on the other hand, often merges with the *Herbarium Apuleii* of c.400.¹⁶¹ This text combines Pliny, himself extracted into the *Medicina Plinii*, with Musa’s *De herba vettonica* and Placitus’ *Medicina de quadrupedibus*. Compilations are also found in Anglo-Saxon witnesses, for example London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius C.iii of c.1050.¹⁶² Other recensions such as the *Dioscorides lombardus* or *vulgaris* and the *Liber medicinae ex herbis femininis* mix their currents with Arabic sources of text and illustration.

The seminal example of the Salernitan school, the *Liber de simplicibus medicinis* or *Circa instans*, is such a combination of Greco-Latin and Arabic origins. The plant synonyms make clear that its roots lie in the Eastern sphere, but its schematic images belong to a more diluted tradition. Further derived from the *Circa* are a number of compilations, such as the *Tractatus de herbis* of the second half of the thirteenth century, and translations, such as the *Livre des simples médecines* of c.1450. Two witnesses of this tradition are found together in Modena, Bibliotheca Estense, MS 993 and MS 28, one Latin, the other French; both obviously belong to the *Circa instans* group.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷ Voigts (1984), 315.

¹⁵⁸ Nissen (1966), 18-9.

¹⁵⁹ Anderson (1977), 10.

¹⁶⁰ Givens (2006), xviii.

¹⁶¹ De Vriend (1972), v.

¹⁶² Blunt (1979), 32.

¹⁶³ Pächt (1950), 27-8.

An early copy, London, British Library, Egerton 747, has been identified by Collins as conflating *Circa instans* and elements from the Latin *Dyascorides*, the Arab *Isagoge*, and *Macer*.¹⁶⁴ The last text forms the other major mediaeval herbal, made probably by Odo of Meung c.1100. A *terminus post quem* is given by Constantinus Africanus' *Liber de gradibus* c.1070 on which it is based, while its being cited in 1123 forms the end date.¹⁶⁵ *Macer* was also one of the sources used by Henry of Huntingdon for his *Herbal* c.1118-1135, extracts from which work were later added to the *Macer* transmission.¹⁶⁶ A last item of interest is the Latin *Agnus Castus* in London, British Library, Sloane 2948, a work in part touching upon the *Circa instans* and, less so, *Macer* texts.¹⁶⁷ This manuscript also contains, in addition, a *Synonyma herbarum* and Alexius' *De septem herbis*.

The third direction of manuscript transmission is the encyclopaedia, exemplified by three thirteenth-century authors. Thomas of Cantimpré's *De rerum natura*, written around 1230-1245, was received in Dutch by Jacob van Maerlant as *Der naturen bloeme*, c.1270, and in German by Konrad von Megenberg as the *Buch der natur*, c.1350. Cantimpré's compilation shares its title with *De naturis rerum* by the English Alexander Neckam (nicknamed Nequam), written c.1280; the supplement to Neckam's *De laudibus divinae sapientiae* also contains a book on herbal lore. Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum maius* of c.1260 informed Maerlant's *Spieghel historiael* of c.1285-1288, but its herbal parts are excluded. Neither of these encyclopaediae ever found its way into Middle English, nor were any of them printed in early Renaissance, although the extract by Megenberg was the basis for later humanist herbals.¹⁶⁸ Transmission in English manuscripts and prints was reserved for Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum*. Its considerable medicinal use in the later Middle Ages is demonstrated by the presence of separate excerpts of chapter VII *De infirmitatibus* and XVII *De herbis* from London, British Library, Sloane 983, a manuscript also containing a text titled *De viribus herbarum*.¹⁶⁹ Its further history in England is marked by Trevisa's 1398 translation *On the properties of things*;¹⁷⁰ also the first English herbal printed c.1495 by Wynkyn de Worde.¹⁷¹ Printing is discussed later in the chapter; the description of the English versions of the above-mentioned manuscript transmission will be undertaken now.

3.2 English manuscripts

Trevisa's translation of Bartholomaeus' encyclopaedia at the dawn of the fifteenth century is an important event for multiple reasons. Trevisa's patron, Lord Berkeley, championed a change in literature from monastic houses to the educated laity;¹⁷² it corresponded to a shift in universities, where popular works were used and Latinised by academics, and conversely many lay physicians could use high and low language in their reading.¹⁷³ In the newly available theoretical knowledge many mediaeval readers were "capable of gaining instruction in more than one language."¹⁷⁴ The use of multilingualism for herbals is unsurprising, considering its culture history and its need for

¹⁶⁴ Collins (2003), 239.

¹⁶⁵ Crossgrove (1994), 55.

¹⁶⁶ Rigg (2003), 224.

¹⁶⁷ Brodin (1950), 25.

¹⁶⁸ See section 3.4 on printing.

¹⁶⁹ I.e. the *Vertues off herbes*, no.17); cf. Seymour (1969), 11; (1973), 28. Other extracts of Book XVII are Glasgow UL, Hunter 323; London, Wellcome 335; Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole 1397 and Jesus College 141; cf. Meyer (2000).

¹⁷⁰ Keiser (1998), 3595 lists fifteen manuscripts and three printed editions; see the inventory for bibliographic details.

¹⁷¹ Seymour (1973), 29.

¹⁷² Edwards (1988), 501-2.

¹⁷³ Crossgrove (2000), 54.

¹⁷⁴ Talbot (1967), 191.

synonymy and source study.¹⁷⁵ At the same time, the local character of flora assures a readership in vernacular texts. This shift is reflected in a steep increase in fifteenth-century herbal medicine, with English rising over eightfold compared to the fourteenth.¹⁷⁶ Studying medical manuscripts, the complementary nature of Latin and English is readily seen. This functional bilingualism can extend to all levels of language, from the whole text to mere words.¹⁷⁷ An English text may have Latin rubrics, as in the *Virtutibus herbarum* for the *Vertues off herbes*. Source citations may be in Latin to provide additional authority, such as in the *Macer* tradition,¹⁷⁸ where one original phrase on the plant Porrum may be employed in an otherwise English context. Alternately, a Latin tract on urines is followed by an English summary by the same scribe.¹⁷⁹ Such usage is described later.

Macer Floridus De viribus herbarum (App. 1 I.i) has multiple translations into English. The text closest to the Latin occurs in sixteen manuscripts, fifteen from the fifteenth century, one from the sixteenth;¹⁸⁰ they contain around sixty-six to eighty-eight of the originally seventy-seven sections. In Sloane 393 and 2527 the translation is attributed to a Thomas Kytte. According to the rolls he was a notary public in Lincoln, later created vicar of Felgham in the Chichester Diocese c.1413.¹⁸¹ This would place the tentative date of the text in the early-fifteenth century. In one of the registers Kytte is mentioned as a witness together with another notary, John Loueliche, later rector of St Alphege's in Canterbury, whose sisters were nuns at Markyate, Hertfordshire.¹⁸² He or his father, John, may have been the John Lelamour attached to a 1373 *Macer* translation (Li B).¹⁸³ In reality a conflation of *Macer*, *Agnus Castus* and what Moreno calls the *Rue Herbal*; it is found in various versions in six manuscripts.¹⁸⁴ The Sloane 5 version of c.1460, which names Lelamour, renders 211 species in 214 sections. It also contains Henry Daniel's *Virtues of rosemary*, and, in a sixteenth-century quire, a copy of the fourteenth-century *Synonyma de herbis Latine, Gallice et Anglice*.¹⁸⁵ A separate version surviving in Sloane 635 may have been made by Gilbert Kymer (Li C). Derivative of *Macer* are the *Tretys of diverse herbis* (Li i) attested in twenty-five witnesses,¹⁸⁶ and the *Vertues off herbes* (Li iii) in some forty;¹⁸⁷ both are conflated compilations of manuscripts.

The other major mediaeval tradition, Platearius' *Circa instans*, has slightly less currency in English translations (II.i). Twenty-seven witnesses are attested, most of which start with Aloe, but at least three open with Absinthium.¹⁸⁸ A related recension, *Liber de diversis medicinis* (II.iii), can be found in some fifty-nine tomes; these treatises most often open with the use of betony and vervain. Then there is the *Agnus castus* treatise (II.ii), of which approximately forty-two texts are attested. Two of these, i.e. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud misc. 553 and Aberystwyth, Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru 572D, are labelled *Liber de virtutibus herbarum*, a title reminiscent of the

¹⁷⁵ Voigts (1979), 257.

¹⁷⁶ D. Singer (1928), 100-1; note the caveats by Robbins (1969), 66-70.

¹⁷⁷ Pahta (2004), 75.

¹⁷⁸ "Fracturas solidat, durtiasque relaxat. [My translation.] It will realign fractures, and ease obstructions. Vulnusque appositum, cito cum sale claudit." Put on a wound with salt, it causes it to close.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. San Marino, Huntington Library, HM 64 below.

¹⁸⁰ See the inventory in the appendix for all references.

¹⁸¹ Episcopal register of Robert Rede, 1397-1415, p.322; Calender of Patent Rolls, Henry IV, vol. 3, p.358; Lateran Regesta, Vol. CIV. 13 Boniface IX. De Regularibus. 1402. Non. Jan. All retrieved from <www.british-history.ac.uk>.

¹⁸² Spelled *Loueliche*, *Loveliche*, *Lovelich*. Talbot (1967) calls him *John Love*; Anderson (1977), also, *John Lelamar*.

¹⁸³ Moreno Olalla (2007), 120.

¹⁸⁴ Sloane 5, 7 (fragm.), MCC Pepys 1661, Wellcome 5650, Lincoln 91, Bodley, Additional A.106. Cf. Keiser (1998).

¹⁸⁵ Talbot (1967), 186.

¹⁸⁶ Holthausen (1896); Garrett (1911). Keiser (1998) lists 24 items, but includes item 14a) probably as a later addition.

¹⁸⁷ Keiser (1998); Grymonprez (1981)'s edition does not mention other manuscripts; Voigts-Kurtz (2000) add several.

¹⁸⁸ Garrido Anes (2005a), 203.

Macer text group. Another manuscript, London, British Library, Sloane 962, begins with the herb Aristolochia. This corresponds to a number of other texts, one of which, London, British Library, Sloane 770 is again attached to Gilbert Kymer, the physician to the Duke of Gloucester c.1420.¹⁸⁹ This witness is linked to the *Macer* group, so that it may be a conflation of the two major texts. Also related to the herbal are two picture-books, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1504 and the Helmingham Herbal, the order of which may hail back to the *Agnus castus* compilation.¹⁹⁰ The former, dating to c.1510-20, is proof of the production of herbal manuscripts in the sixteenth century.¹⁹¹ Most texts run from A to S but four have additional material of apparently later date.¹⁹²

Henry Daniel not only translated treatises on the uses of rosemary and on urines, he also composed a herbal of his own (III.i), sometimes referred to as the *aaron danielis*. The Dominican friar annex gardener, writing c.1380, describes 160 items beginning with Artemisia or Mugwort, the mother of herbs, *mater herbarum*. This incipit is occasionally confused with *Macer Aemilius De viribus herbarum*. However, *Macer* was only one of Daniel's sources, along with Platearius' *Circa instans* and the synonym list known as the *Alphita*. Rigg concluded that it was the *Macer* expanded by Henry of Huntingdon that informed Daniel.¹⁹³ These additions to *Macer* are found by themselves in the manuscripts, usually labelled as *A few herbs of which Macer treated not*, numbering some 27 plants.¹⁹⁴ These usually commence where *Macer* breaks off, with the first herb to be mentioned being Sanicle. Daniel also wrote the most famous of herbal monographs, on *Rosemary*. It claims the rosemary came to England c.1340, conferred as a gift from the Duchess of Hainault to her daughter Philippa, wife of King Edward III. In his 1864 *Leechdoms*, however, Cockayne claims that rosemary had been cultivated since Anglo-Saxon times.¹⁹⁵ Daniel's prose *Rosemary* (III.ii) is the basis for an anonymous verse version (III.iii). There also appears another anonymous *Rosemary* treatise in prose (III.iv) or verse (III.v),¹⁹⁶ and other unrelated texts (III.vi).¹⁹⁷ After rosemary the most popular plant is probably betony (IV), attested in over forty witnesses; other plants often recurring on their own include rue, sage, lunary, laurel, avens and oak (V.iv).¹⁹⁸ Still others concentrate on gathering,¹⁹⁹ oils and water (V.i-iii) or gloss vernacular synonyms (VI).

3.3. Manuscript miscellanies

In the transition from continental to English herbal literature, it has become clear that 'translation' of manuscripts should be thought of as a process of recomposition. Many texts are compiled from various sources, and even ostensibly literal copies often contain additional material. This not only holds on the textual level, but also for manuscript miscellanies. Amalgamations of varying textual content were rather the norm in manuscripts as well as prints. In both areas they could be bespoke trade, catered to the taste of the prospective owner.²⁰⁰ When education and prosperity expanded the readership, the production mostly consisted of compilations, even after the advent of printed books. Manuscript miscellanies could often be collected in quires, possibly produced by separate

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Sloane 635, 962, 1571, NLW Peniarth 369B, TCC R.14.32; cf. Getz (2004). See also *Macer* 23).

¹⁹⁰ Barker (1988), 55; see also the similarities between London, British Library, Add.17866 and Tokyo, Takiyama 46.

¹⁹¹ Blunt (1979), 97.

¹⁹² Brodin (1950), 11; Sloane 2460, Ashmole 1447 and TCC R.14.32 contain A – Z, Harley 3840 has two extra herbs.

¹⁹³ Rigg (2003), 224; the herbal survives in two witnesses, London, British Library, Arundel 42 and Additional 27329.

¹⁹⁴ Frisk (1949), 189-200.

¹⁹⁵ Cockayne (1964), II.xii.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Keiser (1998), 3824-5 Daniel *Rosemary* nineteen prose, seven verse; anonymous twenty-five prose, two verse.

¹⁹⁷ Robbins (1970), 401, names fifteen variants; on the basis of the eVK more are added, but new analysis is needed.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Voigts-Kurtz (2000); on the basis of the eVK sixteen more manuscripts are also adduced as *Rosemary* treatise.

¹⁹⁹ The verse preface to some of these, "To God that is our best leech", underlines a mixing of herbalism and religion.

²⁰⁰ Hanna III (1996), 37.

scribes, only assembled and sewn afterward,²⁰¹ however, second-hand distribution of manuscripts and books is not to be underestimated.²⁰² These developments entered effortlessly into the field of the printing press, leading to a further standardisation of output.²⁰³ The herbal thus entered into a realm of specialists, catering for a public of non-professionals.²⁰⁴ Consequences for the contents of herbals are best examined in some manuscripts where the quire composition, the juxtaposition of medical and herbal texts, and the overlap between Latin and English items can be investigated.

A. Cambridge, Trinity College, Wren Library R. 14.32 (905). 1440-1460. Given by ?John Wilson Described James (1901), 317-9; Brodin (1949), 101-2; Hunt (1989a), xxxv; IMEP XI (1995), 31-7 1/8" × 5 1/4", 172ff., varying number of lines to a page, mostly in one hand at times poorly legible Vellum 1¹²-5¹², 6⁶ || Paper 7¹⁶ (1-2 cancelled) 8¹² 9¹² (3 canc)-13¹² (12 canc) || 14¹² 15¹² (12 canc)

This convoluted manuscript consists of three originally separate parts the first of which is vellum. After three flyleaf recipes on f.1r, and two added entries *Apium* and *Anetum* on f.1v, starts *Agnus castus*, ff.2r-65r, inc. *Apium risus or herba scelerata or botranon is an herbe that men clepe*, and ending with *Zucarium*. Room is left in the middle and near the end for additional recipes, with ff.65v-66v remaining blank. The seventh quire starts with a *Tractatus de urinis* in English, ff.67r-80v, and an English text incorrectly titled *Dieta ypocratis*, ff.81r-82r. The eighth quire has two treatises on infirmities, and then *De Nouem Folijs Salgie* in English, f.85r, inc. *For to knowe the ix sauge leuys be the ix spires aforsayde*. A phlebotomy tract is next, with a text on the seven planets afterwards, on f.88r, inc. *Saturnus is colde and drye and whoso be born*. Three more texts on bodily illnesses come, after which appears John of Burgundy's pest treatise, ff.90r-92r. The verso has a number of recipes, including one on *dwale* that is edited by Voigts.²⁰⁵ Quires 9 and 10 expound on the medicinal uses of waters, ff.93r-100r, and of oils, ff.100v-112v; *On gathering herbs*, inc. *Medycynes be doon som be leuys*, follows on ff.113r-114v. The eleventh quire has the *Gode medicines for diuerse infirmytees* on ff.116r-127v; quire 12 is another herbal, the beginning of *Circa instans*, inc. *Aloe is hote and drye in the · ii · degre*, ff.128r-129v. Only the entries for A are given, with C added later. Recipes from *Circa* also find their way into *Agnus castus* on ff.8r-28r and ff.61r-64r. The *Book of trees* and *Craft of grafting* appear on ff.130r-131r; these are also found in some copies of the printed *Banckes's herbal*. Recipes and charms follow on ff.132r-34r; the first of which, the charm of Longinus "to staunche blood", has been crossed out, while the last charm has the text *Bake bake ybake girte gute hany ga gu greton grab et sibra vriel tobiel*. A verse herbal, the *Tretys of diverse herbis*, appears f.134v, inc. *Astrologye there been of hem too / the longe and the round also*. It is interrupted by recipes on f.139v to mark the beginning of quire 13, but finishes on ff.144v-148r. The second section coincides with the *Virtues of rosemary*, inc. *As we have of olde techers and teches trewly*. The rest of the quire is mostly occupied by recipes. The third part of the manuscript has another version of the *Circa instans* in Latin on ff.151r-168r. Following folios are torn and covered with scribbles in many hands until all writing ends at f.172.

²⁰¹ Boffey (1996), 75.

²⁰² Harris (1996), 171.

²⁰³ Bennett (1949), 163.

²⁰⁴ Keiser (2005), 7; cf. the preface of London, British Library, Sloane 404, f.2rv, cited in Garrido Anes (2005a), 205: The prayours of gret nombre of povre people that hade not thing to help them self, and be cause of that pouerte, the apotecariis reffuse them, and be cause [...] suche medicins that longe to a seke body [...] be ffound in priue places, as in gardyns wildernes and medowys [...] Any man that wil helpe him selff may haue help with smale expenses ayenst of hall manere of sekenes [...].

²⁰⁵ Voigts and Hudson (1992), 34-56; cf. Henslow (1899).

B. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1481 (Bodl.7720) 14C(1AB) 15C(1CDEF2345) c.1600(6) Described Black and Macray (1845), 1320-1325; IMEP IX (1991), 93-96. Various scribes' hands Small folio size, 6 MSS, 3 vellum, 3 paper; first MS six portions, A cover, B 10 ff., C-F in quarto 1⁴, 2¹⁰ (10 canc.), 3⁸ (8 canc.), 4⁴, 5¹² (12 canc.), 6⁶ || 7⁸, 8⁸, 9⁸, 10⁸, 11⁸, 12¹⁰, 13⁸ || 14⁶, 15⁸, 16⁸ || Paper 17⁸, 18⁸, 19⁶ || 20⁸ (2-4 canc.) 21⁸, 22⁸ (5 canc?) || 23⁶, 24⁶, 25¹⁰, 26¹² (blank) (approximate)

Rebound flyleaves on the missal and urines, ff.1r-4r and 42r-43r enclose the rest of the first book; Book B, ff.4v-12r, has the medical dialogue of Frère Randolph or Roland; Book C contains Latin prognostications, ff.14r-20r; Book D is mostly John of Burgundy's *Plague* tract, ff.21r-23r; Book E has remedies of John Tyryngham (d.1484), ff.25r-35v; Book F are remedies as well, ff.36r-41v, including a *Rosemary* treatise inc. *Take rosemarine and boil it in water and use of that water first*. MS 2 is misbound, the new order being ff.52-83, 44-51, 84-101; leaves missing after f.51 and 53. As a result the copy of the *Circa instans* is disorganised, inc. *Ciclamam .i. th'erthe nott his rote is propirly ycalled* on ff.64r-83v, and ending on ff.44r-49r. A second copy of the *Circa* inc. *To purge flevme and malencoly and colere to comfort*, ff.54r-63v, is interposed inbetween. In the margins of ff.74v-75r are additions inc. *Asterion is an herb called lunary that growep among stones*, from the tradition of the *Agnus castus* or *Lunary* treatises. The last two quires are tracts by Thomas de Novo Mercato, ff.84-92, and an imperfect copy of Lydgate's *Governayle of helthe*, ff.94r-101v. In between, on ff.92r-94r, is an extract from Trevisa, *On the properties of things*, Book 7, *Medicine*. MS 3, ff.102r-123v, has a Latin version of *Macer*, inc. *Ad mea principia sit semper virgo Maria*, with marginal English names, plus three recipes from the *Liber de diversis medicinis* on f.107v. MS 4 renders recipes, ff.124r-140v, and the *Virtues of rice* and other vegetables on ff.141r-146v. MS 5, ff.1r-24v, has remedies for humans, while MS 6, ff.25r-46r, has recipes for horses as well.

C. London, British Library, Sloane 962. Edited Gray (1974), Braekman (1986), and Hunt (1990). Described by Ayscough (1787), Scott (1904), Hunt (1989a), Keiser (1998). 15C (c.1425-1450).²⁰⁶

This witness opens with a catalogue of plants on ff.2r-4v, the Latin names of medicines on f.5r ff., some charms on ff.9v-10r and a *Synonyma herbarum* on f.10v unmentioned by Hunt (1989a). The next forty folios, ff.12r-50r, are taken by the *Liber de diversis medicinis*, dated to c.1425-1450 by Keiser (1998); included here are a copy of the *Virtues of betony* on f.34rv, and a charm on f.39v. The eighteen folios from 55r-72v are comprised of the making of salves (ff.55r-65v), oils, waters (ff.66r-72r), and a charm of St. William (f.72rv). On f.73r begin new charms and recipes of Galen (72v-73v), a *Rosemary* tract with a synonymy list inc. *Aaron barba* (ff.79r-82v), inviting links to Henry Daniel's herbal, and a Latin text attributed to Ypocras on the gathering of herbs (85v-89v); the herb list is stated to conform to the *Sinonoma Bartholomei*, inc. *Aaron barba Aaron jarus pes*. After these Latin, English and French recipes/charms appears a Latin *Macer* with English glosses (ff.90r-123v). A number of pages equal to all the preceding is dedicated to the book of medicines attributed to John of Ardenne, ff.123v-248v. The Latin, English, French and Dutch recipes appear to have been added over the course of several centuries. The last eleven leaves, ff.249r-259v, are assigned to *Agnus castus*, inc. [*Aristologia rotunda*]. Large parts of these pages are, however, also filled with other items, notably a glossary inc. *Salmatina*, ff.252r-259r, and other medicinal texts.

D. Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, X.90 (Medical Misc 14). c.1425 (Keiser). Gothic minuscule

²⁰⁶ There is unfortunately no up-to-date catalogue for the Sloane manuscripts so that a collation cannot be provided.

Described Stephens (1843), Müller (1929), Matthes (1935), Frisk (1949), Brodin (1950), IMEP X 1¹⁶ 2¹⁶ 3¹⁶ 4¹⁶ 5¹⁶ 6¹⁴ 7¹⁰ 8¹⁶ 9¹⁶ 10¹⁶ 11¹⁶ 12¹⁶ 13¹⁶ 14¹⁶ (Brodin); originally bound qq.7-14 || 1-6 Paper MS (1, 4-5, last vellum), quarto (c.15x23cm). Lacunae pp.86-87, 91-94, 100-101, 104-105.

Two separate booklets, qq.7-14 and 1-6 respectively, were bound into one to make the manuscript X.90. What is now the first quire begins with recipes, pp.1-15, followed by the *Vertues off herbes*, pp.18-32. The beginning of the *Liber de diversis medicinis*, pp.32-35, and multiple other recipes fill the third quire, while the next two are taken by the *Tretys of diverse herbis* on pp.49-80. Then Henry Daniel's *Virtues of rosemary* occur on pp.80-86, a lacuna, prose recipes and again a lacuna. What was the first part opens with a glossary herbal list on p.95, the remainder of the incomplete quire being filled with Latin and English recipes and charms and a number of lacunae in between. Thereafter the quires are regular again, with more Latin and English recipes and charms, and also two urinoscopies on pp.123-127, after which there are extracts of the *Treasure of poor men*. Latin and English recipes continue into the tenth quire, which closes off with a treatise on bloodletting, pp.151-152. Quire eleven opens with random recipes but on p.156 becomes an *Agnus castus* text; this fills the rest of the volume until it breaks off suddenly and incompletely in quire 14 on p.216. The copy of the text, even if taken as main text for the edition in Brodin (1950), is still imperfect; according to eVK 433 starting with Staphisagria, which is usually found at the end of the treatise, and it also has a gap in the letters P to S. All in all, containing 190 plants, it is relatively complete.

E. San Marino, Huntington Library, HM 64 (Phillipps 6883). c.1485-1500 (Keiser and Dutschke) Described De Ricci (1935), Wilson (1939), MacKinney (1965), Dutschke (1989); IMEP I (1984) Paper, 307x215mm. i + 1²⁸ 2²⁶ 3²² 4-8²⁴ + i. Mostly 2 columns, 32-37ll, mostly in secretary script

A marvellous medical miscellany starts with calendars, some on bloodletting, ff.2r-17r. The next 1 ½ quires contain various recipes up to f.47v; ff.48r-51v have urinoscopy and astronomy. Quire 3 has a *Book of astronomy* on ff.52r-61v, and another *Destinary of the twelve signs* on ff.63r-72r. Before more prognostication, the *South English Legendary* appears in shorter form on ff.72v-79r. Thereafter astronomy and phlebotomy continue with another longer *Lunary* treatise on ff.84r-93v. From there on are recipes including Petrus Hispanus' *Tractatus Mirabilis Aquarum* on ff.96v-99r; also in his name, extracts of water (ff.103r-104r) and oils (104r-113r) include a passage on betony (ff.108v-109r), as well as a charm to staunch blood mentioning *Longeus miles*, ff.110v-111r. Next is a copy of the *Liber de diversis medicinis* on ff.114r-120r, another recension of which appears to be included between ff.143v-176r. Inbetween appear other recipes, among which a glossary of the *Alphita* type inc. *Absinthium* on ff.125r-135r; a text on Avens on ff.146v-147r; and a *Flum Jordan* charm on f.158r. The last quire comprises two items, i.e. *Agnus castus* and *Circa instans*. The first opens with *Asterion .i. Lunary*, ff.176v-183v, and is an extract of c.79 *materiae* running only until *Quinquefolium*, which is incidentally often the first item of the *Vertues off herbes*. The second, on ff.184r-190v, is equally incomplete, its c.278 *materiae* ending prematurely at the S. Stannard (1964) and Hunt (1989a) call it a glossary derived indirectly from *Alphita* and *Sinonoma*; the manuscript ends with *Experimenta secreta et experta*, a remedybook ordered head to toes.²⁰⁷

3.4. Overview of manuscripts

The above descriptions put the English herbal text into its rightful manuscript context. Witnesses containing herbals are often composites, containing material originally separate, sometimes also

²⁰⁷ Gratitude is due to Clark Drieshen for the gracious loan of microfilm scans of the above Huntington manuscript.

in time, even combining vellum and paper. The quire structure is usually very noticeable, with a major herbal text often heading a new quire, and various minor items added after the main tract. These items are quite interchangeably Latin and English, so that it is clear that the users of such popular medicine must have been versed in both. It is equally evident that herbals take their place between other areas of medicine quite comfortably. Plants are another mode of healing not unlike urinoscopy or phlebotomy. Likewise, herbal recipes and spiritual charms are often combined with little apparent distinction. Sometimes there is even interchange of information between various texts, with entries from one herbal text being added to another herbal text in the same manuscript.

This leads to another point, namely that there are always numerous recensions of one text, with vernacular versions varying from the original Latin texts, even if contained in one witness. These are compiled from various sources, copied from differing manuscripts, and adapted to the idiosyncrasies of the scribe and the intended user. Latin texts existing in separate translations, and confluences of multiple traditions convey complex transmissions. Convolute volumes shows that even after their production manuscripts are still a living market. The quires could be recompiled, sometimes misbound; even separate manuscripts are combined to form a new unity and meaning. If space was left on the leaves new texts written c.1600 could be added to a manuscript of c.1400. In this manner both old and new manuscripts formed firm competition to the new printing presses not only in terms of popularity and readership but also in its mode of compilation and production.

3.5. Print tradition: theoretical and technical background

“What printing presses yield we think good store / But what is writ by hand we reverence more:
A book that with this printing-blood is dyed / On shelves for dust and moth is set aside,
But if't be penned it wins a sacred grace / And with the ancient Fathers takes its place.”

– John Donne (tr. from the Latin by Edmund Blunden, 1955-6)

While manuscript markets were flourishing with new and second-hand trade, as seen in the last sections, an innovation initially in illustration technique led to the advent of the printing press. In Mainz around 1450, Gutenberg subjected the existing block-book to a new method of moveable type setting, thus creating a competitor to the text and image of the manuscripts. However, early printers were anxious to imitate the written word so as not to scare off their potential public. Thus the manuscript was used as a basis for the prints, which often mimicked its layout to perfection. The tomes had to be borrowed from their owners, who continued their patronage of the text trade. As a result, some manuscripts of the wealthy noble class show marks of the printing press.²⁰⁸ The handwriting of the scribes was translated to different type cuts for church, school, university or bibliophile.²⁰⁹ A new press would often specialize in one market, or cater to the popular taste in bibles or grammars. The production mode is not unlike the contemporary uniform ‘sloping gothic vernacular’ manuscripts, which were already produced and reused to the demand of the market in the late fifteenth century. The cooperative activity of ateliers, such as in London, is an important indication of the profit involved.²¹⁰ The same scribes, illuminators and binders working there could be the compositor, decorator and press operator occupied in the print trade, collaborating on the pre-production page for page, and bringing with them a high standard of consistency.²¹¹

Yet the print trade also brought considerable divergences to the management of resources.

²⁰⁸ Bone (1931), 305.

²⁰⁹ Hawkins (1910), xxiv.

²¹⁰ Griffiths (1989), 2-3.

²¹¹ Greg (1923), 117.

The steep costs of setting up a printing shop and preparing each new impression would be offset only by issuing and selling bulk quantity. Whereas a scribe would not normally bear the costs of production, the printer had to secure financing before embarking on his business; often printers would work together to share the risks.²¹² Most of the early entrepreneurs ended in bankruptcy, even though they were usually wealthy at the outset. The ones that endured, having to deal with unsold copies, were often their own booksellers. It is therefore common practice to bind with a new print an older work lying on a dusty shelf. Such *Sammelbände* are again not different from the manuscript convolute, while the presence of tract volumes based on the individual taste of the reader reminds of the manuscript miscellany.²¹³ The development in manuscripts, caused by the growth of a literary public, thus continued into the printing trade. Paper, already on the rise, was soon to become the main component of book production. The first leaf, traditionally left blank for fear of damage, could be used for textual advertisement just as the colophon saw extended use.²¹⁴ Illuminations were soon overtaken by wood and metal engravings. Standardisation of layout was improved by being able to print two pages at a time, and manuscript signatures were found to be equally useful in the making of a book.²¹⁵ In total, the differences between the manuscript and prints should not obscure significant continuity and overlap in both late-mediaeval book trades.²¹⁶

In the second half of the fifteenth century the number of newly-made manuscripts was almost as high as in the first half, with second-hand trade vastly outnumbering initial printed productions.²¹⁷ As the two markets combined, every new manuscript was “potentially a copy of some incunable”, as this remained the main method of distribution.²¹⁸ Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the printed book copied from the manuscripts not only form but also contents. When the trade had become established in the 1470s, the herbal proved a profitable printing production. After the publication of *De proprietatibus rerum* c.1470, in which Caxton may not have had a hand,²¹⁹ Latin editions of Mesue (1471) and Serapion (1473) saw the light. Konrad von Megenberg’s *Buch der natur* (1475) was not only the first vernacular herbal, but also the first with realistic imagery. These preceded the publication of Macer’s *De viribus herbarum* (1477) and the *Herbarium Apuleii* (1481), which was the first to be fully illustrated; an illustrated edition of Macer appeared c.1482. None of these was printed in English at the time apart from the encyclopaedia by Bartholomaeus; its 1495 edition by De Worde only came about with substantial external financial leverage.²²⁰ The last of the mediaeval Latin herbals was the *Circa instans*, only coming out in 1497, even though a French edition had appeared in 1487 as the *Arbolayre*, later reissued in 1498 as the *Grant herbier*. This last item will prove fateful for the English tradition.

On the continent the *Circa instans* also initiated another set of printed herbals of primary importance. The first, the quarto *Herbarius* or *Herbarius latinus* (1484), was compiled from both the *Circa* and the *Herbarium Apuleii*, as well as the encyclopaedias of Bartholomaeus Anglicus and Vincent de Beauvais. Its first vernacular translation appears to have been a Dutch one, the

²¹² Bennett (1949), 155.

²¹³ Lewis (2004), 16.

²¹⁴ Dibdin (1810), i.xlii says the first title-page belongs to De Worde's edition of Trevisa's *On the properties of things*.

²¹⁵ Blades (1861), i.29-32.

²¹⁶ Blake (1989), 405.

²¹⁷ Harris (1989), 171.

²¹⁸ Bühler (1960), 16, 25, 44.

²¹⁹ Dibdin (1810), i.98-100.

²²⁰ Edwards (1993), 123. An English copy of Macer mentioned in the COPAC catalogue must be an erroneous entry: Macer Floridus. Macri philosophi de virtutibus herbarum noviter inventus ac impressus. Venetiis : apud Bernardinum Venetum de Vitalibus, 1506. 48 leaves ; 20.5cm. Quarto, a-m4. Royal College of Surgeons of England. XX(38783.1).

Kruidboek, printed by Johan Veldener in Culemborg the same year.²²¹ The second, the folio *Gart der gesuntheit* or *German Herbarius* (1485), should be considered a new creation out of previous materials, apparently edited by Johann von Caub (Johannes Cuba), with ostensibly naturalistic illustrations.²²² The third, the folio *Hortus sanitatis* (1491), is a Latin elaboration of the German edition, including a new title and preface, and adding weights, tables and indices.²²³ A section on animals was translated into Dutch as *Der dieren palleys*, and subsequently into English as *The noble lyfe and natures of man*.²²⁴ It is the second version, incorrectly called the *Ortus sanitatis zu deutsch*, which underlies the French *Arbolayre*. This uses the same cuts, whereas its prologue and text are derived from the *Circa instans*. Its second edition, entitled *Grant herbier*, was translated from French into Dutch as *Groten Herbarius* (1514), and later into English as the *Grete herball* (1526). Hence herbals entered England through continental German, Dutch and French texts.²²⁵

3.6. Overview of prints

In the popularity of their continental examples lies one reason for the late introduction of herbals in England. The Latin *Herbarius* family and its French translations were supremely popular, and manuscripts of the English herbals were still being created. On the speculative printing markets, vernacular medicine was not held in much authority or regard by early printers and their public; the success of vernacular herbal manuscripts was not yet translated into prints as on the continent. In the early decades of the sixteenth century, it was mostly foreigners introducing such volumes, either from abroad or after moving to London. Notable among these are works of Braunschweig, Englished as *The vertuous handywarke of surgeri* (1525) and *The vertuose boke of distyllacyon*, but also a Latin text of the *Hortus sanitatis* (1527), by the Flemish printer Laurence Andrewe.²²⁶ Thus forty years after the *Herbarius* vernacular herbal texts reach England via alternative paths. One of these is a compilation of English herbals in manuscripts such as *Agnus*, *Circa* and *Macer*; called after its first editor, *Banckes's herbal* (1525; [App. 2 I](#)); another a translation of continental prints with introduction and illustrations from other versions, the *Grete herball* (1526; [App. 2 II](#)). Although the latter had a longer print tradition, *Banckes's herbal*, small in size and unillustrated, proved the more practical book for people who preferred vernacular medicine to Latin originals.

There are some twenty editions of *Banckes* between 1525 and c.1561, usually divided into three titles: *Banckes's herbal* proper; ps.-Askham's *Little herball*; and Wyer's ps.-*Macer's herbal*. While the dating of the last two groups is debatable, the first group can be further subdivided.²²⁷ However, the chronology and interdependence of the editions is still a subject to be investigated. Where most scholars focus on bibliographical entries, it can be shown that an analysis of textual variants and plant names, just as in manuscripts, is a useful tool; these changes are noted in **bold**. The 1525 edition by Banckes is entitled *Here begynnyth a newe mater / the whiche sheweth and / treateth of y^e vertues and propyrtes of her-| bes / the whiche is called | an Herball*. The 1526 text varies only in spelling. They give humours at the end of about half of the chapters until Morell,²²⁸ after which degrees are given at the beginning; up until this point the order mostly follows *Agnus*, thereafter it is also influenced by *Macer*. Some of the later headings are English rather than Latin.

²²¹ Duff (1968), 15. A copy in the Nijmegen collection has been noted.

²²² Klebs (1917), i.83; Helmstädter (2007), 204, mentions a manuscript c.1511 derived from the *Gart der gesuntheit*.

²²³ Klebs (1918), ii.42.

²²⁴ Hudson (1954), x; a proper edition is being prepared by Houwen (Forthcoming b).

²²⁵ Nissen (1966), 26.

²²⁶ Franssen (1990), 40.

²²⁷ Larkey and Pyles (1941), x; Brodin (1950). Most readings seem to correspond to the Rawlinson Ms; cf. appendix.

²²⁸ For humours (hot, cold, moist and dry) and degrees (1-mild to 4-extreme), see chapter 2, subsection 2, on page 13.

Notable spellings are **Auetum** for Anetum, **Apumirisus** for Apium risus, **Artamasia** for Artemisia. The index at the end has many independent spellings such as **Anetum**, **Cabochus** or **Iusquinianus**. The second edition misspells **marer** for **mater** in the title and introduces some additional readings, e.g., **Acus demonus** or **Feniculus poitinus**, the index adds **Angnus castus**, **Blasominta**, **Frebrifuga**; this book is bound together with a *Treasure of poor men* in the only extant copy from Cambridge.

The next edition has a new title, *A boke of the propertyes of herbes the which is called an Herbal* (Skot, ?1532-37). It only survives in one copy in the Radcliffe Science Library in Oxford. It antedates an edition by Robert Redman and one by his wife Elizabeth after his death c.1539-41, both entitled *A boke of / the propertyes / of herbes the / whiche is / called an / Herbal*. These texts add degrees in five A entries, and produce spellings such as **Apumerisus**, **Arthamesia**, **Abrotanum** for **Abrotinum**, **Balsaminta**, **Bleta** for **Beta**, **Eupatica** for **Epatica**, **Plastinaca** for **Pastinaca**, and so on. Almost all of these are in the first part before Morell, but the index is closer to Banckes's text. One wonders whether Banckes or Redman worked from a conflated text, or conflated themselves. Elizabeth Redman has **Enpatica**, **Feniculus poeticus**, **Laparium rubeum** for **Laparium rebuum**.²²⁹ Her herbal is again bound after the *Treasure of poor men*, as is Petyt's edition inc. *A boke of / the propertyes / of herbes the whiche / is called an Har- / bal* bound with the same. The spellings are similar to Redman: **Eupatica**, **Feniculus poeticus**, **Ligustum** for **Ligustrum** and even **Lautiola** for **Lauriola** as Redman. Middleton's 1546 text corresponds to Redman, but not to Petit; for instance **Enforbium** for **Euforbium**, **Fumus terre** for **Fumis terrae** as well as **Fumicretum** for **Fume cretum**.

Two editions by Copland belong to the second subgroup of *Banckes*, lacking the additions that define the third. The first, *A boke of the propertyes of herbes the whiche is called an Herball*, is by Robert Copland (?1542-47); the one following by Robert or William Copland (?1548), titled *A boke of the propertes of herbes the which is called an Herbal* has some characteristic woodcuts. Under a new title, *A boke of the / properties of Herbes called an her- / ball, wherunto is added the tyme y^f / herbes, Floures and Sedes shoulde / be gathered to be kept the whole ye- / re, with the vertue of y^e Herbes when / they are stylded. Also a generall rule / of al manner of Herbes drawn out / of an auncient boke / of Physycke by / W.C.*, appears a new version with the three additions. In the c.1550 edition the *Gathering* and *General rule* precede the text with the *Waters* at the end, in ?1552 all additions follow the text; both versions have alternate copies for different addressees. Two or three further editions are printed by King c.1560, as is added on the title-page of one text. King clearly follows Copland's 1552 text; **Anetum**, **Apiume risus**, **Triplex domestica**, **Cicuta**, **Caruo**, **Enulacampana**, **Enforbium**, **Epatica**, **Feniculus poeticus**, **Hastucaregia**, **Pionium**.

Another deviation from Banckes alternate to Copland is the *Little herball* of ps.-Askham, entitled *A lytel herball of the properties of herbes newly amended and corrected, with certayne addicions at the ende of the boke, declaryng what herbes hath influence of certayne Sterres and constellations, wherby may be chosen the beast and most luckye tymes and dayes of their ministracion, accordynge to the Moone being in the Signes of heauen, the which is dayly appoynted in the Almanacke, made and gathered in the yere of our Lorde god / M.D.L. the xii day of February by Anthonye Askham P[h]isycyon*, and printed by Powell in 1550/51;²³⁰ additions at the end by Askham are absent. Other modifications are made mostly around NOP, at the point where the sources of the text interchange. The text is more strictly alphabetical, mostly around A. Interesting spelling are **Linisticum** in the text vs. **Lauisticum** in the index and the name **Liquiritia**; this use is also found in Copland ?1552 and in King ?1560. The latter also edits the *Little herball*, with the spellings **Linisticum**, **Linquritia** and different tables; Askham's additions are still absent.

²²⁹ This last spelling is shared by Robert Redman and the first Copland edition, perhaps pointing to their relationship.

²³⁰ This notation means that the year is 1550 old style in the witness, but according to our calender in 1551 new style.

The actual differences between these editions and the late *Banckes* text are in all relatively minor.

The three Wyer prints are considered separately. Closest to the *Banckes* group in style and title is *Hereafter folo / weth the know- / ledge, proper- / ties, and the / vertues of / Herbes*, c.1539. The text follows the early editions, but changes in the order beg to ask if it is based on a different manuscript witness;²³¹ cf. the separation of *Astrologia longa* and *Aristologia rotunda*; the absence of *Dens canis* and *Fabaria minor*; the position of *Gracia* finally rather than initially in the letter G. Spellings such as *Auetum*, *Apumerisus*, *Astarton* or *Beta* betray an early text, as does the absence of degrees in the first half. There are different additions at the end on Oak, Aquavita and Grafting. The second Wyer copy, *A newe Her- / ball of Macer. Translated / out of La- / ten in to / Englysshe* c.1542, has no more to do with *Macer* than the other editions. It sometimes puts the English name before the alphabetical Latin, *Smallache .i. Apium*, *Cheruyle .i. Aperium*, *Mugworthe .i. Artemisia*. Some of these are later on repeated in the second part; additions and spelling are mostly the same. The third Wyer text is a reproduction entitled *Macers herbal practysyd by doctor Linacro* (?1550) repeating the marginal glosses of the previous print but now only at their approximate location;²³² it also has similar spellings, e.g. *Dancus cleticus* for *Daucus creticus* and the same page numbers.

From the detailed discussion of *Banckes* it appears that prints, like manuscripts, are rarely direct copies of their predecessors. New editions add, distort or rearrange material; furthermore, they may make modifications from other sources than those present in the original, thus leading to the duplication of similar entries. A new edition is thus not necessarily an integral copy of one predecessor, as text, images and indices may be taken from elsewhere as well. This process is especially visible at the point where different sources come together and cross-sect. In addition, they may be based on different issues than the one closest chronologically. A printer would not always have the most recent text available; he may also choose to collate his text with another edition, or even with one of the original (though not necessarily the same) manuscripts. This is known to have happened in Caxton's second edition of the *Canterbury Tales*; on the basis of the above textual analysis, it may be surmised for some of the newer compilations. Possible piracies involved with this re-editing are further proof of the possible profits in the market of the herbals.

Whereas *Banckes* is thus a compilation from manuscripts, the *Grete herball* (App. II) is a translation of a continental print. Its popularity there does not appear from the only four English editions between 1526 and 1561, with an alternate version of the 1529 text printed for Laurence Andrewe. A 1516 edition must be an error,²³³ because the printer, Treveris, was not active before 1525. Compared to *Banckes*, it gives frequent synonyms, sometimes in Greek or Hebrew; degrees and references to habitat are throughout; other *materia medica* (stones, minerals) appear. Here too synonyms sometimes distort the alphabetical entries or entries are reordered under their synonym. Around the time of the third edition Turner (App. III) published his first contribution to the herbal tradition, the *Libellus de re herbaria novus* (1538), expanded into the *Names of herbs* (1548). The texts are remarkable for their carefully alphabeticised synonyms; also added are a list of German plants, a table of common English names for the Latin herbs mentioned, and errata. At the time of Copland's copy of *Banckes*, Turner put out the first part of his *New herball* (1551). Intended as an expansion of the bare facts of his previous publications, only its first entries actually contain the names, images, varieties, locations, degrees and properties. Its hurried production was amended in the second and third part printed in Germany (1562-68), where Turner was exiled. These were bound together with Turner's book on baths, and often also Braunschweig's *Homish apothecary*.

²³¹ Brodin (1950) says the spelling *Cidamum* for *Culamem* corresponds to Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud misc. 553.

²³² The gloss *Emerawde* on A.iii, conform the text in the *Newe herball*, is actually spelled *Emerode* in *Macers herbal*.

²³³ Franssen (1990), 199 n.147; cf. Franssen (1986), 272-3 n.44.

The latter is also the author of the *Vertuose boke of distyllacyon*, later printed by Andrewe and Treveris (1527, ?1528, ?1530). Another printer, Paynell, translated the *Regimen sanitatis* into English (1528), with ten more editions until 1650. Paynell also published a pox tract (1533); both were printed regularly by Berthelet, who also reissued Trevisa's translation of Bartholomaeus' *De proprietatibus rerum* (1535; printed De Worde 1495; App. IV). Chapter XVII on trees and herbs contains c.197 items with etymologies and citations from Jerome, Isidore, Dioscurides and Pliny. A third issue (East 1582) has a number of items with English titles, also adding Arabic numerals. Other frequent titles (App. V-XI) are Andrew Boorde's *Dietary of health* (Wyer 1542, c.1545 and ?1550; Middleton 1544; Powell 1547; Colwell 1562; Jackson 1576); the same holds for Bullein's *Government of health* (Day 1558, 1559; Sims 1595) and Elyot's *Castle of health* (Berthelet 1539, 1541, 1544, 1547, ?1550; Powell ?1560; Marshe ?1561, 1572, 1576, 1580, 1587; J. Orwin 1595). Moulton's *Mirror of health* (Wyer 1531 – Jackson 1580) is more of an astrological remedy-book. Lastly, ps.-Albertus Magnus' *Boke of secretes* was printed by Copland 1548-60 and King c.1560.

In the main, vernacular medicine took a huge flight in the course of the sixteenth century, and herbals held a fixed position within that spectrum. Out of 153 vernacular titles in the field, ± 7% qualifies as herbal amounting to 27 titles, most of them in the small, popular octavo format.²³⁴ The actual number must be much higher, however; herbal sections in medicinal texts could also be included, while alternate and parallel editions have not been counted in their full figure. The total of 27 (19 *Banckes*, 4 *Grete*, 4 Turner) can be increased by 3 parallel *Banckes* texts (Copland 1550a, King 1560a, 1560b), 1 additional *Grete* version (Andrewe 1529) amounting to 31; the 3 Trevisa recensions make it 34, and the 6 *Boke of secretes* issues make a total of 40. Then there are 3 editions of the *Book of distillation*, 7 of the *Regimen sanitatis*, 7 of the *Dietary of health*, 4 of the *Regiment of health*, and 14 of the *Castle of health*, all of which are in part herbal. Depending on the definition of herbals, the total number of English editions may actually be as high as 75.

3.7. Printers' founts

In the last sections it was seen that prints, just as manuscripts, can be collaborative efforts, so that multiple hands may work on one edition, or one text may be published by successive printers; the last process may be attempted with or without permission and with or without resort to piracy. In addition, titles may be rebound and issues reassembled to form miscellaneous print compilations. As with manuscripts, the production and use of printed texts is best exemplified by looking at the output, or fount, of individual printers and the texts they copied and combined from other origins. The printers discussed below all issued multiple herbal texts among other works of medicine and literary items; they communicated with their colleagues trying to find their place on the market.

Robert Wyer was active for two periods of time. He had worked selling books for other printers, such as William Butler, Laurence Andrewe and Peter Treveris, before being listed as a printer in the 1524 rolls. Before his first surviving book appears, he was summoned to court in 1527 for violation of a Royal Proclamation in issuing a religious work, *Symbolum apostolicum*, without licence. After this, Wyer turned away from the association of printers. His extant works between 1530-1535 are in the area of astrology, lay devotion and medicine; Moulton's *Mirror or glass of health* was printed thrice between 1530-1534, and four more times between 1542-1550. At the time Wyer made use of four founts and three devices, sometimes spelling his name 'Wyre'. He occasionally and dubiously uses the notices *cum privilegio regali* or *ad imprimendum solum*. Many of his issues are reprints or piracies, their titles changed to prevent litigation or discovery, with the use of names such as Plutarchus or Ptolemy reflecting only part of their overall contents.

²³⁴ Webster (1979), 243.

Between 1536 and 1539 no prints from Wyer appear; afterwards the colophons of Wyer's texts have a change of address when the Bishop of Norwich took ownership of the Duke of Suffolk's estates. The output of his second period of printing is unfortunately of poorer quality than before. New are the Salernitan *Antidotarius* (seven editions from 1539-1556), Boorde's *Dietary of health* ([1542], ?1550) and Erasmus' *Governaunce of good health* (1550-52); no titles date to after 1556. As for herbals Wyer published three undated editions: *Vertues of Herbes*, [1539]; *A newe Herball*, [1542], and *Macers herbal*, ?1550 as well as two editions of the *Vertues of waters* ([1542], 1552). Neither Macer nor Thomas Linacre, named in the second edition, was specifically used by Wyer; these reworkings of *Banckes's herbal* do contain three additional chapters not in the original text. He was succeeded in his printing by Nicholas Wyer (his son?) and Thomas Colwell after 1562.²³⁵

John King, while he was working in Paul's Churchyard at the sign of the Swan, also made his mark upon the printed herbal. In 1555 he issued a copy of *Banckes's herbal*, printed for John Waley, and a variant for Abraham Veale, who is probably also the recipient of one for an A. Vely. More so than his predecessors, King put the plants with their degrees in strict alphabetical order; he omitted some of the more spurious information and added notes on the practical plant virtues. His printer's mark is reminiscent of Petyt and Middleton, and King may have used their editions. In 1561 he reissued Powell's *Little herbal* (1550), actually another recension of *Banckes* with an added chapter on *Gathering herbs*; one wonders whether he thought of them as different editions of the same text, or considered them distinct.²³⁶ Also appearing around the same time is the other major text, the *Grete herbal* (1561), first issued by Treveris (1526). A last herbal item is the *Book of secrets* by pseudo-Albertus Magnus, a reprint of the William Copland recension of 1548-1560. In only six years, three major sources of herbal lore passed the pressed of this enigmatic printer, showing that vernacular herbal literature had assumed a popular place on the market of printing. Like Copland, King was dedicated to editing romances, *Sir Degarre* and *Sir Lambewell* in 1560. John King, a member of the Stationer's Company, was succeeded in his shop by Thomas Marshe, who also made no fewer than five editions of Elyot's *Castle of health* (between 1561 and 1587).

William Copland was probably a son of Robert (d.1547), successor of Wynkyn de Worde. He inherited his father's shop in Fleet Street, the Rose Garland, where he produced his first book in 1547 for Richard Kele, who also ordered a reprint of his father's *Properties of herbes* (1552). Compared to Robert's version (?1542-1547) and an intermittent issue (in 1548 for John Waley), William revised the work and added three chapters. These are present in all later editions printed, with the initials W.C., for himself and for Kitson c.1550, for Wyght and, as was said, Kele c.1552. In the first decade he also issued three editions of the *Book of secrets* by pseudo-Albertus Magnus (1548-60),²³⁷ Boorde's *Book of the introduction of knowledge* (?1548, 1555, 1562), a reprint of the *Book of hawking* (1550; issued before by De Worde 1486, 1496), an alternate version of the *Mirror or glass of health* called the *Treasure of poor men* (for Thomas Petyt, 1552), and a reissue of the *Recueil of the histories of Troy* (1553; Caxton 1475). From his two illustrious predecessors he inherited a fondness for romances such as the *Four sons of Aymon* (1554; cf. Caxton 1490, De Worde c.1505, Notary c.1510); the *Seven wise masters of Rome* (c.1555; Pynson 1493, De Worde ?1506); *Valentine and Orson* (c.1555, c.1565; De Worde c.1510); and *Sir Bevis* (c.1560, c.1565; De Worde 1500). Some of Copland's romance prints even seem to have been transcribed into a 1564 manuscript.²³⁸ Copland was also a founding member of the Stationers' Company in 1557,

²³⁵ Plomer (1891), (1897); Lathrop (1914); Tracy (1980); ODNB (2004).

²³⁶ Larkey and Pyles (1941), 207.

²³⁷ Bennett (1949), 277, sets the date for the first edition [1549].

²³⁸ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 261.

yet was fined four times for violations of policy. By this time he had moved to the parish of St. Martin, and after that to that of St. Margaret, where his last book must have been printed about 1567-68. When he died, in the next year, his funeral had to be paid for by his fellow Stationers.²³⁹

Thomas Berthelet, probably of French origin, but not the same as T. Bercula, also a printer, issued his first religious book in 1524, and after a number of editions of Erasmus was summoned for doing so without a licence. By 1530, however, he had succeeded Richard Pynson as printer to the King, and reissued them *cum privilegio a rege indulto*. Berthelet may have been an apprentice at Pynson's press, although he also uses cuts from De Worde. Apart from the regal proclamations and legal publications, Berthelet printed grammars, as well as Gower's *Confessio amantis* (1532), and a reissue of Trevisa's translation of *De proprietatibus rerum* without De Worde's cuts (1535). The last provides a link with Berthelet's interest in medicine. Paynell's *Regimen sanitatis* (1528, 1530, 1535, 1541) and *De morbo gallico* (1533, 1536, 1539, 1540) sold well, and all of Elyot's works were published by Berthelet between 1531-1545, including the influential Latin-English dictionary (1538, 1545) as well as the *Castle of health* (1534, ?1536, 1539, 1541). The last was reissued by his nephew Thomas Powell in *aedibus Bertheleti* in 1547; after the death of Henry VIII, Berthelet resigned as the King's printer, leaving his business to Thomas in 1555, who kept the presses at London in Fleet Street, in St. Dunstan's parish, at the sign of the Roman Lucrece. Thomas Powell may be related to William Powell, printer of an issue of *Banckes's herbal* (1550), the *Dietary of health* (1547), and the *Breviary of health* (1552); or to Humphrey Powell, stationer and printer of the *Antidotarius* (1548), but their output is smaller and humbler than Berthelet's.²⁴⁰

John Day started printing c.1547 when the Protestant Edward VI became king of England. That they shared the same faith is clear from Day's output, with works by Hooper, Latimer and William Turner. The latter also issued his *Names of herbs* (1548) with Day and his partner Seres, working in Sepulchre's Parish at the sign of the Resurrection, a little above Holbourne Conduite. Another medical work they published is Bullein's *Government of health* ([1548], 1558/59, 1559). The partnership soon dissolved and in 1549 Day went to live at Aldersgate until his death c.1584. He continued his business of translating, publishing, printing and selling books, mostly religious, for example Becon's *Catechism*, Ponet's *ABC with Little Catechism*, and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*; from the last author also stem the voluminous *Acts and monuments* (1563, 1570, 1576 and 1583). Day also acquired privileges allowing him to print sermons, psalters, and even the *Bible* in 1553. The money generated enabled various productions such as Aelfric's *Testimony of antiquity* (1566) or Euclid's *Elements of geometry* (1570). After an attempt at his life and an unsuccessful business expansion, Day was forced by his fellow Stationers to give up a number of his printing privileges. Keeping enough to be assured a steady income Day was succeeded by his son Richard in 1584.²⁴¹

3.8. Aftermath

Taking its text from the *Grant herbier*, images from the *Groten herbarius* and a preface from the German *Gart*, the *Grete herball* takes the continental tradition of the printed herbal into England; literally as well, since the first attestation of the word is dated to the 1516 title of the first edition. Here, however, is a problem, since this date is considered a misprint for 1526.²⁴² The first printed English herbal, save from Book 17 in Trevisa's translation of *De proprietatibus rerum* (De Worde 1495) may well have been the version of *Agnus castus* known as *Banckes's herbal*. Its 20 editions

²³⁹ Dibdin (1810), III.127; Francis (1961), 1-44; Edwards (2002), 139-46; ODNB (2004).

²⁴⁰ Duff (1906); Clair (1966), 177-81; ODNB (2004).

²⁴¹ Jackson (1965); Oastler (1975), 1-87; Davies (1996), 78-93; ODNB (2004).

²⁴² Ryden (1984), 14.

between 1525 and 1561 far outnumber the handful of editions of *Grete herball*.²⁴³ Comparing the two texts, *Banckes's* contains no figures, fewer medicinal virtues and more botanical clues; yet its smaller size and therefore lower price will have contributed to its popularity and many reprints.²⁴⁴ On successive reissues more information was added, such as the treatise *On grafting and planting* printed in 1520 by De Worde;²⁴⁵ others editors attributed *Banckes* to authorities such as *Macer* or *Linacre*. Other herbals reworked existing herbal information into more general medical uses, such as *Paynell's Regimen sanitatis* (1528), *Elyot's Castle of health* (1537), *Boorde's Dietary of health* (1542), *Bullein's Government of health* (1558), or astrological tracts, such as the pseudo-Albertus Magnus' *Boke of secretes* (c.1548); thus the herbal aspect of medicinal literature is much diluted.

After 1560 most of the mediaeval herbals are "swept from the market" by Turner's herbal, though *Banckes* was ostensibly still being used as a source in the 1615 book *English hus-wife*.²⁴⁶ The most notable text by Turner is his *New Herball* in three instalments (I 1551 II 1562 III 1568). Again, text and images head back to the continent; e.g., *Brunfels's Herbarum vivae eicones* (1530) with illustrations by *Weiditz* was a model for herbals to follow, such as *Fuchs's Historia stirpium* (1542) and *Bock's Neu Kreutterbuch* (1539, illustrated edition 1546).²⁴⁷ Turner took the images, but the text was adapted to his own botanic experience, attacking his predecessors as well as his contemporaries, who in humanist fashion denounced mediaeval writers but still adhered to their ancient authority.²⁴⁸ By publishing in English Turner's text was of more use to a local doctor than the coagulated Latin compilations, while a summary of mediaeval lore appealed to the individual scholarly reader.²⁴⁹ As is common Turner's text was bound with other works, such as the *Book of medicine*, showing the entanglement of these genres. Generally, of all printed books on medicine between 1486-1604, about 1 in 15 titles or editions is a herbal, and most are of octavo format.²⁵⁰ These popular prints were widely read and pirated, notwithstanding royal privileges for printers or their incorporation in the Stationers' Company along with mercers and apothecaries in 1557.²⁵¹ By then the herbal has lost much of the form that connected it to its tradition throughout the ages.

4. The several sages: a case study of *Salvia*

"He is blosme opon bleo, brihstest vnder bis,
Wip celydoyne ant sauge, ase þou þiself sys."
– *Harley Lyrics* 3.17-18

She blossoms in complexion, bright as linens be,
Like celandine and sage, as you yourself can see.
[My translation.]

4.0. Introduction

In the previous chapters the transmission of herbal literature from antiquity until the Renaissance has been tackled in a necessarily general manner. By singling out one herb and following through the ages its vicissitudes, this historical process can be clarified. By examining in detail testimonia throughout time, underlying elements of genre tradition, production and use, manuscript and print context resurface in a chain of derivation and reception. Thus the theoretical considerations of the previous chapters are embodied in a practical investigation. The herb chosen for this purpose has

²⁴³ Blunt (1979), 113.

²⁴⁴ Arber (1912), 38.

²⁴⁵ Henrey (1975), i.3.

²⁴⁶ Best (1979), 450.

²⁴⁷ Earle (1880), ix.

²⁴⁸ Raven (1947), 62.

²⁴⁹ Harvey (1984), 3.

²⁵⁰ Webster (1979), 243.

²⁵¹ Pollard (1916), 27; Reed (1917), 159; Johnson (1944), 298, Matthews (1962), 26.

interesting properties in terms of its nomenclature, botanical description and medicinal attributes; furthermore, it is found in a wide array of related and unrelated tracts that form a cross-section of the history of herbal lore. Even its names refer to the dual goals of herbal lore: safety (*Salvia*) and wisdom (sage). Both attributes together account for the several faces of sage seen in the sources.

Sage (*Salvia* spp.) is a small perennial subshrub of the mint family Lamiaceae (Labiatae) with wide branches, square stalks, gray-green hairy leaves and sweet-smelling violet-blue flowers all of which are used in medicine, although most of its power seems to be contained in the leaves. As such its components are more or less active during different times in a year as well as within a day.²⁵² The herb is native to Mediterranean lime soils as well as China and America; cultivation has spread over the world, with over nine hundred subspecies.²⁵³ The common species is *Salvia officinalis* L., called true, garden, Dalmatian, common or broadleaf sage; but even here there are red and purple varieties.²⁵⁴ It is native to the Western Balkan, naturalised in Southern Europe, and spread later on. With this spread the name *Salvia* was applied to various local varieties, some of which not sages, such as *Artemisia tridentata* or *Lantana camara* L. Even among sages various names are applied; the glossaries *Alphita* and *Sinonoma Bartholomei* list twenty-three synonyms for *Salvia* species,²⁵⁵ while Hunt (1989a) has seventeen synonyms in six subspecies, not counting *Teucrium scorodonia* L. Apart from medicine it is nowadays used widely in cooking; Dickens's *Christmas Carol* (1843) describes a family "basking in luxurious thoughts of sage and onion."

4.1 Genre tradition

"The nynthe *sterre faire and wel / *Be name is hote Alaezel,	*star *by
Which tak'th his *propre kinde* thus / Bothe of Mercurie and of Venus.	*properties*
His Ston is the grene Amyraude, / To whom is *yoven many a *laude:	*given *praise
Salge is his herbe *appourtenant / Aboven al the remennant."	*appertaining

– Gower, *Confessio Amantis* 7.1379-86

The earliest written record of sage is in the herbal of Chinese emperor Shen-Nung (c.3000 BCE), who recommends the use of red sage (*Salvia miltiorrhiza*, in Chinese called *danshen*). A presence of sage in oriental medicine is attested in the Egyptian term used in Dioscurides, spelled *apusi*; its correct transliteration *anusi* or *anousi* is found in the *Herbarium Apuleii* and in the Arabic writers. That this species, occurring in literature, is indeed *Salvia aegyptica* L. is confirmed by a depiction on a brick wall of the first millennium BCE and a continued cultivation throughout Egypt.²⁵⁶ It is attested in the famous Ebers Papyrus (c.1550 BCE) to cure itches and promote female fertility,²⁵⁷ as well as a general apotropaic use against the biting of serpents and the intrusion of evil spirits. The variety seen on a fresco of Minos' palace in Knossos, Crete is not Egyptian sage but the local *Salvia fruticosa* (c.1450 BCE).²⁵⁸ This is called in Greek *ἐλελίσφακος*, wild or three-lobed sage (*Salvia triloba*), to distinguish it from the tame sage, in Greek *σφάκος*, in Latin *Salvia pomifera*. Three-lobed sage is broad, short, thick and hairy compared to Dalmatian or garden sage (*Salvia*

²⁵² Kelley (2007), 250.

²⁵³ Epling (1938), 1.

²⁵⁴ Kintzios (2000), 6.

²⁵⁵ *Elilifagus, lilifagus, eliffacos, liliffacon, tillifagus, spagnum, fagnon, scarade, scaredalsa, eupatorium, eufrasie, esbrium, ambrosia, bui, l(a)ecopulgubrium, lachet, salvia, salvia domestica, salvia agrestis, salvia salvatica, saltica, salgea, wilde sauge*. Cf. Mowat (1882), (1887).

²⁵⁶ Loret (1975), 54.

²⁵⁷ Bönnhoff (2004), 18.

²⁵⁸ Tucker (2004), 734.

officinalis L.); the former, common on Crete and in Greece called Greek sage is that described by Greek writers such as Theophrastus or Dioscorides, not Dalmatian or garden sage. According to Theophrastus, *Historia plantarum* 6.1.4 and 6.2.5, sage is a “spineless undershrub” (ἀνάκανθος φρυγανικός), ἐλελίσφακος being rougher, taller and more succulent than σφάκος.²⁵⁹ Dioscorides’ ἐλελίσφακον, ἐλαφόβοσκον or σφάγγον (III.33) seems a long, rough and thick shrub, with square stalks and hairy leaves, whitish, odoriferous and poisonous; apparently the wild sage.²⁶⁰ From the Latin translation, speaking only of *Salvia*, as the one brought to the rest of Europe along with the Roman soldiers and the Benedictine monks, it has become clear that mediaeval properties of sage include at least four different varieties of the herb, one severe side-effect of its wide dispersion.

Apart from synonyma, including *anusi*, *apusi*, *elelisphakon*, *elaphoboskon*, *sphagnon*, *phagnon*, *becion*, *cosalon*, *ciosmin*, *salvia* and *salgia*, the qualities of sage can also get confused. The initial list in Dioscorides contains several categories. Firstly, sage moves the urine, menstrea, and the embryo, which is at times abused by women. Secondly, it cleanses wounds, especially of the sting-ray, and stops bleeding and spitting of blood. Thirdly, sage stops colds, coughs, pains in the spleen and ulcers, and dysentery. Lastly, it stops genital itches, and dyes hairs back to black. About the same time Pliny, applying the names *elelisphacos*, *sphacos* and *salvia* to the plant,²⁶¹ has a wild kind being taller, damper and fouler than the tame one. This wild sage moves the urine and the menstrea; saves against the sting-ray by benumbing the affliction; is drunk for dysentery, staunching wounds (especially snakebite) and against ulcers; and eases itches of the private parts. Apart from this confusion of the qualities of *Salvia triloba* and *Salvia officinalis*, the name *Salvia* can also denote a kind of Bechion (*Tussilago*) beneficial to coughs, side-pains and serpent stings. When we turn to the *Herbarium Apuleii* (4th century CE), all that is left is itching of the genitals and of the anus. It is clear that in the transmission of both texts and plants over times and space, the spread of indigenous plants and information about them produces many a misunderstanding.

When sage and its description did enter the West through either Roman soldiers or monks, its varieties and names were adapted to local use and lore, with as a result a mix of transmissions. After the decree of Charlemagne sage was one of the plants of which cultivation was endorsed;²⁶² thus it is used by Alcuin, in the Diedenhofen decree, and the St. Gallen monastery garden (c.840). In a monastery garden described at the same time by Strabo, *elelisphacos* has become *elelifagus*; its properties give it first place in the garden.²⁶³ These are more botanical than medicinal, though: sage is of strong odour, evergreen and keen to branch out profusely unless properly taken care of. The abbess Hildegard von Bingen (late 12th century) on the other hand enumerates its many uses: *salvia* or *selba*, warm and dry of nature, helps dispel smells and dissolve excess saliva; is helpful

²⁵⁹ Hort (1916), 6-11.

²⁶⁰ Gunther (1934), 44; Osbaldeston (2000), 165.

²⁶¹ C. Plinius Secundus, *Naturalis historia* XXII.71: [My translation.]

“Herbarii elelisphacum graece, salviam latine vocant.” Herbalists call the Greek *elelisphacum* the Latin *salvia*.

²⁶² Carolus Magnus, *Capitulare de villis vel curtis imperii* (c.800), §70 [My translation]:

“Volumus quod in horto omnes herbas habeant: id est liliū, rosas, fenugreek, costus, salviam, rutam, abrotanum.” We desire that in the garden all herbs are held; that is the lily, roses, fenugreek, costus, sage, rue and southernwood...

²⁶³ Walahfrid Strabo, *Hortulus Ad Grimaldum Monasterii Sancti Galli Abbatem* (c.840), §2 [My translation]:

“Elelifagus prima praeferet honore locorum, / Dulcis odore, gravis virtute, atque utilis haustu. / Pluribus haec hominum morbis prodesse reperta, / Perpetuo viridi meruit gaudere iuventa. / Sed tolerat civile malum: nam saeva parentem / Progenies florum, fuerit ni dempta, perurit, / Et facit antiquos defungier invida ramos.”

The sage shines in the premier rank of honour, / Sweet-smelling, virtuous, and good for drinks. / Found valuable for most men's maladies, / Retaining through its worth an evergreen youth. / But civil war it suffers; lest removed, / The wild and flowering young destroy their parent, / And spiteful with the older stalks dispenses.

The idea that *Salvia* is the “Mutter aller Kräuter” must stem from a German translation as it is not in the original text.

in curing palsy and worms; helps against aches of the head and stomach; retains urine; and eases the pain of poisons, although it cannot cure them. These properties overlap with older authorities, but also point to an independent tradition. Interestingly, the German translations of Hildegard list qualities in line with the Greco-Roman texts: detoxic, abortifacient, astringent, and dyeing hair.²⁶⁴ The other German cleric involved in herbalism, Albertus Magnus, will be dealt with more fully in the light of the English translations; however, the tame and wild varieties of sage he distinguishes are identified as *Salvia domestica* L. and *Teucrium scorodonia* L. the latter known as ambrosia.²⁶⁵ The qualities of both these broad-leaved and rough plants having blue flowers and many branches are in their leaves and roots respectively; as a *herba sacra* it is helpful against epilepsy and palsy.

It is now clear that the travels of herbs produce change in plant variety and nomenclature. When German herbal texts, themselves in part borrowed from southern sources, were used by the Italian Rufinus in the thirteenth century, they mixed with texts from the school of Salerno derived from Arab transmission of Greek originals; thus, two strands of the old herbals were reunited.²⁶⁶ The same strands end up in English herbal texts, both in Anglo-Saxon and Middle English times. The earliest English herbals seem to make little mention of sage, and only as a minor ingredient. The Anglo-Saxon translation of the *Herbarium Apuleii* gives two uses against itching of the anus and of the genitals, while the *Lacnunga* also uses it for problems with the teeth, urine, lungs, eyes as well as against yellow disease and elfshot.²⁶⁷ It also occurs in *Henry Daniel's herbal* which has not been edited. Daniel mentions a contemporary use as a substitute for 'whyȝt ambrosus'.²⁶⁸ The latter part might have been derived from Albertus' confusion of the two resembling species. Other authorities are unaware of its attributes. John Trevisa's translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum* only treats Biblical *materiae*, while other encyclopaedias were not issued in mediaeval English. It needs to be remembered that *Salvia* originated in the Mediterranean region. Only at the end of the fourteenth century did its description become common on the British Isles; its name, sauge or sawge, points to the plant's introduction from French soil, not unlike rosemary.

4.2. Manuscript testimonia

4.2.1 The Macer group

The earliest English herbals to include sage belong to the group of texts connected to the Macer, notably Lelamour's herbal, the Tretys of diverse herbis, and the Vertues off herbes. The Latin and English Macer and the two latter are discussed; Lelamour could not be consulted. The Macer and Lelamour appear in English in the late fourteenth century, the others in the early fifteenth century. The Latin hexameters of Macer are translated in English prose and divided into separate qualities.

²⁶⁴ Fehringer (1994), cap. CLXXVI; cf. Hildebrandt and Gloning (2010), cap. I.63.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Garrido Anes (2005b), 376, where another hand has added "ambrose" to the synonyms of sage.

²⁶⁶ Thorndike (1946), 284-5: 10. "Salvia duplex est, domestica et silvestris. Salvia is twofold, domestic and wild. De silvestri, que dicitur eupatorium, dictum est in E, capitulo Eupatorium Of the wild, cf. under E qv. Eupatory [adducitur testimonia Dioscorides Latina, Macer, Tabula Salerni.]" [other testimonies are also adduced.]

²⁶⁷ Berberich (1902), 127; Cockayne (1864), II.

²⁶⁸ Keiser (1996b), 71.

I.i Aemilius Macer De viribus herbarum.

Choulant (1832). XXIV. SALVIA. 1.870

Saluia, cui nomen elelisphacus est apud Argos,

cum mulsa iecoris prodest potata querelis,
pellit abortiuum, lotiumque et menstrua purgat,

trita uenenatos curat superaddita morsus,
crudis uulneribus (quae multo sanguine manant)
875 apponas tritam, dicunt retinere cruorem.

Cum uino succus tepidus si sumitur eius,
compscit ueterem tussim laterisque dolorem.

Pruritus uuluuae curat uirgaeque uirilil,
si foueas uino fuerit quo saluia cocta.

880 Illius succo crines nigrescere dicunt,
si sint hoc uncti crebro sub sole calenti.

Frisk (1949), Macer/XIX. Saugē (salvia) f.12b
Saugē is clepid in latin salgea and saluia and in
greek lili | phagus.

-Vis prima. For þe mawe.

Saugē drunken with mulsa | dooþ goode to alle
diseasis of þe mawe, and in þe same wise she |
wole deliuere a woman of þe childe þat is ded in
here body and purgeþ | women flours and
makyþ a body to pisse fast.

-II. For venemus bytingges | and woundes.

Saugē stampid and emplastred with salt curiþ
venemous | bvtinges and stancheþ þe blode of
newe woundes.

-III. For þe cough. |

The iuus of saugē drunkyn in wyn wol stanche
an olde cough | and þe ache of þe syde.

-IV.

The wyn þat sawge is soden inne | wole destroie
þe icche of þe cunte and of a mannes yerde | if it
be ofte wassh þer-wiþ.

-V.

Þe iuus of saugē wole make heres | blake if þei
ben ofte oynted þer-with in þe hete of þe sunne. |

The first thing to note is the nomenclature. The Latin *saluia .i. elelisphacus* is known in England as *saugē*, *salgea*, *saluia* or *liliphagus*, other manuscripts add *lifisagus*, *lisiphagus* and *lisisagus*.²⁶⁹ As for properties, the same five categories of Dioscurides are present here: I. purging of embryo, menstrua and urine (the last by alleviating the liver);²⁷⁰ II. cleansing of venom and staunching of blood; III. dissolving of coughs and sideaches (probably connected to the spleen); IV. easing of a genital itch; V. dyeing black of hair. There are minor omissions and additions, but most is similar. Interestingly, the properties of the herbs all include their method of application: I. is drunk, II. is stamped and plastered (Lat. *trita*), III. juice drunk in wine, IV sodden in wine, V juice anointed. The English prose translation thus stays close to the original Latin verse, adding information on application that would be useful to the doctor but spreading further the diversity of nomenclature.

²⁶⁹ Choulant (1832), 1.870; Frisk (1949), 97.

²⁷⁰ *Mawe* in the *MED* is glossed as 'female relative'; this spelling is not included in the lemma *maue* 'stomach, liver'.

Li *Tretys of diverse herbis*.

Holthausen (1896), 327. [18.] Sawge.
Stockholm, KB X.90, p.74(1400-1425)
¶ Sawge is erbe wyl i-knowe
820 Bothe of heye and of lowe.
Who so drynke it with ale or wyn
And hym be ony venym in,
Wyth-inne iij dayis and iij nyth
It schal distroyin it, I þe plyth.
825 It is good to don in ale,
To make it good reles and stale;
And sower[h]ed of ale it wyl abate,
Whil it is good and fresch in state.
Also seyth Macrobius:
830 A [latin] verse, þat is þus:
Cur moritur homo, dum salgia crescit in orto?
“Why of seknesse deyith man,
Whil sawge in gardeyn he may han?”
Lete take þe sawge of þe 3erd,
835 and of venym þou thart neuer ben aferd.
To etyn [it] bothe fresche and grene,
It schall make þi body clene
Fro venym, fro postemys, for pestelens sor,
And make þe to lewe well þe more.
840 Macrobius seyth in his de-vys
þat sawge so meche is of prys,
þat who so ete it or drynk it ilke day,
Tyl kende deth comyth, in fay
[þat] fryst ne schall he neuer deye,
But he hym make myskepe, for sothe I seye.

Garett (1911), 179.
London, BL Add.17866, 13v-14r(1450-1500)
611 Sauge makes þe herte clene.
(f.14r) þus þis verses mene bothe be dene.
Sauge . to drynke wt ale or wyne.
If any venyme be man w^t Inne.
615 w^t in thre dayes 7 thre nyght.
He schal distroy þe venyme oplyght.
It is ful gode to done in ale.
To make it of gode reles 7 stale.
And sourhede of ale it wil abate.
620 Als lange as sauge may kepe his state.
3it telles mayster macrobius.
A vers of sauge 7 and says þus
Cur moritur homo dum salgia crescit in orto.
For defaute whi dies þe mane.
625 þ^t sauge 7 mynte to helpe hane.
Lat hyme take sauge of þe 3erde.
For no wenyme hym thare be ferde
To etyn it bothe rype 7 grene.
His body shal it make ful clene.

630 Who so it etes 7 drynkes I say.
Till keynde dede euel come shal he nouzt dey
Contra vim mortis non est medicamen in ortis

The *Tretys of diverse herbis* is derived most from *Macer*, and usually lists 23 or 24 plants, ordinarily running from betony to fumitory as they are in Stockholm, Konigliga Bibliothek X.90; However, the parallel Additional manuscript starts at leek and has two additional herbs at the end. The latter text is clearly inferior: ll.612 & 631 are unmetrical, ll.613-4 have crooked rhyme, l.616 *oplyght* is obscure, ll.624-5 do not literally translate the Latin and there is text lacking after l.629. The mention of mint in l.625 in addition to sage suggests a different version of a popular proverb. The only Dioscuridean virtues in the text are drunken with wine against venom (II.), and possibly to ease urination (X.90, l.839 *to lewe well*; I.). Further uses in X.90 are against abscesses and the pest; for the rest it is seen as a general pandect, apart from its addition to beer little more is listed. The order and contents of this passage make clear that the *Tretys* does not translate directly from *Macer*; rather, it is a compilation of general comments on sage from several sources aside *Macer*.

Holthausen (1897), 78. Stockholm, KB X.90 (Medical Misc.14), pp.49-80 (c.1425).

[S.47] 8. Here is a medycyne for feurers. ¶ Take a sawge-leef *and* wryte þeron *Christus tonat and* late þe seke man it ete þe fryst day, *and* seye a pater noster, aue Maria *and* a crede. ¶ þe secunde day wryte on anoþer lef angelus nunciat, *and* lete þe seke ete it *and* seye ij pater nostris *and* ij aue Mariais *and* ij credis. ¶ þe thryd day wryte on þe thrydde leef Johannes predicat *and* late þe seke ete it *and* seye iij pater nostris *and* iij aues *and* iij credis. (79) ¶ And qwanne he is hool, þat he do seye iij messys: on of þe holy gost, þe secunde of seynt Mykel, þe thredde of seynt Jon ba[p]tyst; and qwanne he heryth name þe feurers, blysse hym seyng an aue Maria

Both witnesses contain additional recipes ordered conventionally from head to the toes. The Stockholm manuscript has a description of sage that is interesting as a remedy and a charm. The parallels for this text are manifold;²⁷¹ some of them combat the fever, others general ache. What is interesting is that the incantations, which differ from text to text, do not become potent until written down on the leaves and eaten.²⁷² Sage has already been proven to be useful for aches and its febrifugient properties have been established.²⁷³ Charms can thus also be proven effective.

L.iii Vertues off herbes.

Grymonprez (1981), 24 Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley 483. Sawge [ff.65v-66r] (c.1450)

(410) Sawge ys hote *and* drye yn .ij. degrees. And Socrates seythe hyt ys gode for senneves when hyt ys sodyn to wesche þe senneve ther-with. And yff a man drynke hyt *with water and* hony hyt ys gode for þe stomake. Also hyt ys gode for a woman that ys *with a dede chylde*. (415) Let her drynke hyt *with wyne and* she shall have fayre delyverans. Also when hyt ys stampyd *and* leyde to a sore off a venym bytyng hyt shall drawe owȝt þe venym *and* hele þe sore. Also and a wonde be full of blode, stam[p]e hyt *and* ley hyt to þe wonde (420) *and* hyt shall draw owȝt þe blode *and* hele þe wonde. Also drynke sawge *with wyne and* hyt shall sese þe ache vnder þe sydes *and* off þe wombe *and* off þe stomake. Also hyt ys gode for þe dropsy *and* for þe palsy and (424) for þe hede-ache *and* for sore yes.

The *Vertues off herbes* omit etymology and add degrees (hot and dry).²⁷⁴ Of Dioscurides it has I. (abortifacient; drunk), II. (detoxing and bloodletting; stamped and laid) and III. (aches of the side, womb and stomach; drunk with wine); itching genitals or dyeing hair is not mentioned. Three other uses (against aches of the head, stomach, and palsy) also occur in Hildegard's work, eye sores (which may include dropsy) were noted in the *Lacnunga*, but this reference is dubious. The mention of Socrates and his sinews is unprecedented and thus dismissed by Grymonprez;²⁷⁵ according to the latter about a third of the lines are derived from *Macer*; another third from *Circa*. The text seems based mostly on *Macer* and its properties, and partly on *Circa* and its description.

²⁷¹ Heinrich (1896) edits BL Add.33996; Sheldon (1978) BL Sloane 3160; Keiser (1998) adds another nine, of which Ashmole 750 (IMEP IX) and CUL Dd. 4.44 (IMEP XIX) are cited; Voigts and Kurtz (2000) add Bodleian Add. B.1.

²⁷² Cf. Deut 11:18, 20:

“Ponite hæc verba mea in cordibus et in animis vestris, et suspendite ea pro signo in manibus, et inter oculos vestros collocate ... Scribes ea super postes et januas domus tuæ.”

[My translation.]

Place my words in your hearts and minds, and carry them as a sign in your hand, or put them between your eyes ... Write them over your door posts.

²⁷³ Kintzios (2000), 204.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Gallée (1898), 132/“Van der salvien. Salvie is het unde droghe. Se is gût der leveren, der lunghen, der borst, de ere blade et. Se maket och sachte weder ghevent; ere wortele stot unde mit boteren soden unde wrunghen dor enen doc, das is gût en salve de dat drincket an warmen bere (deme menschen de dat binnen te broken efte tospeten is).“

²⁷⁵ Grymonprez (1981), 23, 103.

The similarity of the methods of application underscores the notion of derivation from the *Macer*; still, a translation made directly from this text cannot be surmised on the basis of the sage extract.

4.2.2. The *Circa* group

The second herbal strand includes the Latin, French, Dutch and English *Circa instans* text as well as their English derivatives *Agnus castus* and *Liber de diversis medicinis*. *Circa instans* is attested in English from the early fifteenth century, as is *Agnus*; the *Liber* in the late-fourteenth century. In the tradition of *Circa* the different languages derive from each other as well as the Latin original; the testimonia cited below thus attest to the diversity of transmission in the genre of herbal texts.

II.i *Circa instans*.

Wölfel (1939), 112 De salvia.

Salvia calida est in primo gradu et sicca in secundo. Sola folia eius medicine competunt et viridia et sicca, sed viridia magis, per annum servari possunt. Alia est domestica, alia silvestris. Cum invenitur receptio salviae ponantur folia domestice, sed cum invenitur receptio eupatorii silvestris, domestica magis consumit et confortat. Silvestris est magis diuretica. Vin. decoct. salviae valet paraliticis et epilepticis. In vino decocta et cataplasmata super partem paraliticam multum valet. Fomentatio facta ex aqua decoct. valet contra stranguriam, dissuriam, matricem mundificat, menstrua provocat, in salsamentis competenter ponitur.

n.750/Salvia agrestis eupatorium = Odermennig; agrimonia Eupatoria L. lilifagus = Salbei off. L.

Camus (1886), 112.

411. – (fol. CXXVIII). Salvia... alia est domestica (*S. officinalis* L.), alia silvestris (Eupatorium). Sauge... Il en est de .ii. manieres, de domestique commune et de sauvage que l'on appelle eupatore.

181. – (fol. LVI). Eupatorium (*Salvis pratensis* L.), idem est quod salvia agrestis.

Eupatorium, c'est une herbe qui autrement est appellee salvia agrestis, et est tout ung eupatoire et sauge sauvage.

Vandewiele (1970), 347.

ccli r. Salvia dats selve of salie; twijerhande manire die ene tam ende die ander wilt diemen eupatorium noemet. (*Salvia officinalis* L. – Salie).

clxviiij r. Eupatorium dats salvia agrestis. (*Eupatorium cannabinum* L. – Leverkruid).

Garrido Anes (2005b), 376-7.

[f.86rv] **Salgia.** Sawge is of .ii. maners: þat growiþ in gardeynus, and þat þat growiþ in þe wood and hit is clepid eupatorium, (ambrose), wild sauge. þe leues beþ vsed in medicines, boþ gren and druy. Of al herbes, sauge confortiþ most synewes, rigȝt as among al spices, castory confortiþ hem most. Ffor palsy and epilencie yeue him be wyne to drink þat sauge is sodyn in, and make a plastre of þe herbe, and let him vse þe poudre boþ in metis and drinkus. (For strangur) Seþe saug in water, and wesch a man or a woman þerwyth. And hit wol don away strangury, dissure, and (clense) þe moder. Make a sauce of sauge, percil and (tempre it with) vineger, and kast a litul (powdre of kanel or of karawy), peper þerto, and hit schal mak a man haue a good appetite to mete, and clanse be stomac of (sory) humors þat beþ noyesse.

It is clear that the tradition of *Circa* is agglomerated. The original Latin in Wölfel's text distinctly separates *S. domestica* and *S. silvestris*, also called *eupatorium*. Camus' *eupatorium* is

also called *S. agrestis* in Latin and *S. sauvaige* in French, thus confusing two or three subspecies. This is evidently copied to the Dutch version, corresponding to the French text word for word. A subsequent English rendition follows the French text, supplying even more names (*ambrose* or *wild sauge*; hence Latin *Salgia*); interestingly, the glossary marks all varieties as *S. officinalis*.²⁷⁶ After the nomenclature, though, the English text adds all qualities of sage originally in the Latin. Compared to Dioscurides only the purging of urine (dysuria or strangury) and the womb (*moder*), so class I, is present. The combining of epilepsy and palsy occurs in Albertus' *De vegetabilibus*; the mention of sinews is reminiscent of the *Vertues off herbes* text. The other virtues, for appetite and against humours, are too general to be identified. There is just one statement of botanical use, that the leaves are used green and dry; in the *Tretys* it was said that only fresh leaves were taken. Thus the original Greek practice of harvesting roots has evolved into employing dried specimen. Compared to *Macer* the botanical description is more important; however, the medicinal quality of sage is not given in as much detail, occurring in reduced form as recipes. The disambiguation of the two varieties is useful but also confusing, and is not maintained when its use is discussed.

II.ii *Agnus castus*.

Brodin (1950), 118. *Salgia*.

[MS Harley 3840, f.177v.] *Salgia* ys an herbe that me clepyth sauge | thys herbe ys comyn y-now
The vertu of thys | herbe ys that how that euer a man vse hure yn | etyng or drynkyng or yn
powder he ys goud | for the palsy Also he ys good to hele a man of | the tope-ache Also yf a
man haue a raw wonde þat | bledyþe moche take the powder of hure and ley to þe | wond
Also yf a man haue an old cowhe or ellys | syknesse yn hys sydys tak the juys of thys herbe | and
warm hyt and drynk hyt with wyn and he | shall be hole Also yf a man or a woman haue | gret
ycchenges a-but hure preuyte tak thys herbe | and seþ hure yn water and whessh the preuyteys
þer | wyþ that water and þe jchynge shal go away | Also yf a man wyl haue blak here tak the
juys of thys herbe and whessh well yn the | hot sonne þyn hed þer-wyþ þis herbe ys hot and drye|

According to Brodin, *Agnus castus* is derived from *Circa instans* and *Macer* respectively. Compared to them the etymology is absent, though the text shares with *Circa* the spelling *salgia*. In terms of virtues *Macer* supplies most items: staunching of blood (powder); cough and sideache (juice); itching of privates (sodden); dyeing of hair (juice). The first two virtues, however, are not *Macer*; its use against palsy may stem from *Circa*, but for toothache only the *Lacnunga* is similar. The index to the text glosses Sauge or sawge as *Salvia serriola* or *Euforbium* (cf. *Eupatorium*).²⁷⁷ The censure in the genital afflictions is noteworthy: some *Macer* witnesses also substitute for the rude Latin *uuluæ uirgæque* (“cunte and yerde”) “of the womans and mannys priuey membre”.²⁷⁸ More so than *Circa*, the entry leans towards recipe form, even if the contents are closer to *Macer*. Combined with the absence of humours or degrees, it is hard to call *Agnus* a version of the *Circa*.

II.iii *Liber de diversis medicinis*.

Ogden (1938), 2.

2/37 [Also for þe same [For trauellyng in slepe].] Take sauge & aueroyn & temper it with a littill pepir in wyne & drynke it morne and euen.

5/31 [For blake hare.] Tak sawge & munge it with ashe when þu makes þi lee. Or make powdere

²⁷⁶ Garrido Anes (2005b), 529-30; note that use for the sinews is also mentioned in the 11C Arab *Tacuinum sanitatis*.

²⁷⁷ Brodin (1950), 312.

²⁷⁸ Frisk (1949), 98 names Rawlinson C. 81.

of sawge and menge it *with* May buttre or henne gresse & anoynte þe hare þer-with.

14/15 [Speche.] Take sauge or primerose & stampe it wele & anoynt his tonge vnderneath *with* þe jeuse & he sall speke sone.

18/31 [An oþer þat is a spice for þe tothwerke.] To make a space for þe tothwerke: Tak lij leues of sawge gedirde on a foure sqwarede bedde on crose from an cornere to an oþer, and saye at þe pullynge of euer ilk a lefe a Pater noster and Aue Maria, and þen tak two tyle stones and hete þam in the fire, and þan tak als mekill salte als þe montenaunce of a ʒolke of an egge and laye it on þe stone on brede and tak an halpeny worthe of powder of pepir and laye on brede appon þe salte and þan laye þe leues abown uppon ilkon by o þer ay two & two to-gedir and þan laye þe toþer stone aown als hote als it may be. Bot sett on foure cobills stones þat it ne touche not þe leues, and when þe leues are dryede ynowghe & baken ywelle þe stones, tak þan & braye þe leues all to powder and þe same pepir *with* þe salte þat was baken and þan tak þer-to an halpeny-worthe of powder of licoresse and blende all foure to gedir and putt it in a bleddir and þan late hym þat hase þe tothwerke tak als mekill als a bene and lay to þe tother þat werkes on nyghte when he gose to bedde and lye down on þat sam syde þat werkes and holde þe powder to þe to the als wele als he may & he sall hele.

Another derivative of *Circa* is the remedybook known as the *Liber de diversis medicinis*. Although not strictly speaking a herbal, the *Liber* has a number of sage recipes related to herbals. An entry for black hair, for example, is also found in *Circa* although the ingredients are different; the items on sleep and speech have a certain magico-medical ring to it not found in most herbals. The two strands are also apparent in the toothache recipe, which looks like a combination of the above *Circa* entry and the sage-leaf charm of the *Tretys*. The preparation of the leaves with the saying of a prayer is a form of incantation, while the detailed instructions for use are medicinal. Both branches of herbal medicine are juxtaposed in the same manuscripts for benefit of the user. All in all, in both the *Macer* and the *Circa* tradition, we see that the derivatives of the main texts become closer to the recipe format. This may mean that they are made from intermediary sources.

4.2.3. *Gathering herbs*, astrology, Alexander and Albertus (c.1400)

The *Gathering herbs* text edited by Dawson and listed by Keiser does not contain sage.²⁷⁹ Some of its witnesses, however, form part of a larger herbal context that does contain sage. The *Liber de diversis medicinis* includes copies of the *Gathering herbs*, as in Bodleian, Rawlinson C. 506, British, Sloane 119, or Wellcome, London Medical Society 136, edited by Dawson. In Bodleian, Radcliffe Trust e. 10, the *Liber* includes another text on the *Virtues of sage* which relates the use of sage to cleanse phlegm from the sinews. This property of sage for the sinews has already been noted in the *Virtues off herbes*; the copy in British, Sloane 3542 starts out with this usage of sage. Another manuscript of the *Liber*, British, Sloane 706, has a text entitled *De nouem foliis salgie*, in between a chapter on pulses and one on the planets. The same order also occurs in TCC R. 14.32, which also has *Gathering herbs*. This sage treatise appears to belong to the astrological sphere.²⁸⁰ The *Gathering* can also be combined with an astrological text entitled *Seven days, seven herbs*,²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ Dawson (1934); Keiser (1998), 3826. There is, however, a text on *The Gathering of Herbs* that does include sage: TCC O. 2.13, ff.236r-38r, inc. *Sage belongeth to Aries this herb must be gathered the day the kalends of April* (eVK).

²⁸⁰ Cf. IMEP XI (1995), 31-8: “For to knowe the ix sauge leuys be the ix spires aforsayde whan the leuys be leyd in the myddes of the hand and hald therinne ij ourys or iij tyll they take odour of the pame of the hand and kyndely swete than it is token of lyfe and if the swetyngue ouercom the odour of the sauge than the stomake and the hert stoppyd full of glete and englemyd and that is a token of dethe et cetera.”

²⁸¹ Cf. IMEP III (1986), 44: “Ryghth as þer ben vij dayes so þer ben vij erbes princypall and euery hathe his daye and

appointing herbs to each day of the week. In Sloane 2584 the two are separated by the *Virtues of the Ash*. The *Seven days* text also occurs in British, Addit.4698, and Bodleian, Digby 95. In the latter it occurs before the *Secrets* of pseudo-Albertus Magnus; in British, Sloane 3866, *Gathering herbs* is found with a letter on dietary tips claimed to be from Hippocrates to Alexander Magnus. In these miscellanies, sage can combine with herbals, regiments, recipes and astrology; thus the texts with sage reflect the several possible courses of the herbal near the end of the Middle Ages.

Both Alexander and Albertus are also linked to a group of texts on plants and planets.²⁸² Voigts distinguishes three traditions: one attributed to Alexander and ps.-Albertus Magnus' *Liber aggregationis*; another called *Kyrannides*, connected to Alexius Affricus' *Compendium aureum*; and a third which is a variant on the second. Only the second strand includes sage among its lists. According to Draelants, the situation is slightly more complex. The first text, the *Liber de septem herbis ad Alexandrum*, is added in some manuscripts and all prints after the section on herbs from ps.-Albertus Magnus, to whom the whole is attributed with the title *Liber de virtutibus herbarum lapidum et animalium*, or the *Liber aggregationis*. The second text has hardly anything to do with the *Book of Kiranides*, apart from the fact that both were translated by Alexius Affricus. The third text corresponds to the *Seven days, seven herbs* text above, not to the *Kiranides* as Voigts said.²⁸³ Thorndike mentions another astrological herbal, the *Liber Thessali De virtutibus herbarum* which has twelve herbs for the signs and seven herbs for the stars, including sage; although this tradition has coagulated with the Latin Alexander, Albert and *Kiranides*, it is not attested in English;²⁸⁴ nor is the *Liber de quindecim stellis herbis et lapidibus* attributed to ps.-Hermes Trismegistos.²⁸⁵ Further source study should determine the relationship between these herbals in the manuscripts; as it stands, it seems that astrology is a popular direction for herbal texts in the late Middle Ages.

The two texts that are actually attested in English do shed a different light on the history of herbals and the use of sage specifically. Their transmission, intertwined in their Latin originals, takes two different roads; the one only known in c.1550 print, the other in some five manuscripts.

V.ii A1. *Liber de virtutibus herbarum, lapidarum et animalium*.

Draelants (2007), 281-82.

De virtutibus herbarum. 12 De Salvia. Duodecima herba a Caldeis Gallorrio nuncupatur a Grecis **Olarior** a Latinis Salvia communiter nota. Hec autem herba putrefacta sub fimo in vase vitreo procreat avem habentem caudam serpentinam et alas ad modum merule. De cuius sanguine si tangatur aliquis in pectore amittet sensum per quindenam aut etiam plus. Et si predictus serpens comburatur et ponatur cinis in igne, statim fiet **ictus** tonitruui horribilis. Et si de predicto pulvere ponatur in lampade et accendetur, videtur quod tota domus serpentibus repleatur.

his oure the first erbe ys mogwort and he schall be take þe sonedaye after þe xij daye of þe newe mone and þis herbe made in poudyr maketh a man to forsake his clothis . . . The vij erbe ys valeryan he schall be þe satyrdaye after þe xxviith day of þe mone þis erbe makythe possybill hertys of men and women.”

²⁸² Voigts (2008), 29-46.

²⁸³ Draelants (2007), 61-9.

²⁸⁴ Thorndike (1923), II 233, 728; cf. Friedrich (1968), 70-80:

“De eleliphaco, id est salvia. Arietis eleliphacus. (...) [Contra fluxum et vomitum sanguinis; phthisicis, dysentericis, splenicis et dispositiones matricis.] (...) Et alia quas invenies in Dioscoride.”

One wonders whether this Latin text has anything to do with the English incipit in TCC O. 2.13 cited above in n.263.

²⁸⁵ D. Singer (1928), 759-76; cf. Delatte (1942).

[My translation.]

Eleliphacum or sage belongs to Aries; against diarrhoea, purging blood, atrophy, dysentery, pains of the womb; and others in Dioscorides.

Ps.-Albertus Magnus [c.1483.], *Liber aggregationis*. London: W. de Mechlinia
Duodecima herba a caldeis Colorio vel coloricon / a grecis **clamior** / a latinis Salvia communiter est nomen. Hec autem herba putrefacta sub fimo in vase vitreo *procreat* quandam vermem vel auem habentem caudam in modum merule: de cuius sanguine si tangatur aliquis in pectore ammittet sensum per quindenam & plus. Et si predictus serpens *conburatur*: *et* ponatur [c]inis in igne / statim fiet **histris** tonitruum horribile Et si predictus pulvis ponatur in lampade *et* accendatur: videbitur *quod* tota domus serpentibus repl[e]atur. **Et hoc est expertum a modernis.**

Best and Brightman (1973), *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus*/13

The twelfth herb is named of the Chaldees *Colorio*, or *Coloricon*, of the Greeks *Clamor*, of the Latins commonly *Salvia*, of Englishmen Sage. This herb, being putrefied under dung of cattle in a glassen vessel, bringeth forth a certain worm, or bird having a tail after the fashion of that bird called a Black Mack or Ousel [(*Turdus*) *merula*], with whose blood, if any man be touched on the breast, he shall lose his sense or feeling the space of fifteen days and more. And if the aforesaid Serpent be burned, and the ashes of it put in the fire, anon shall there be a **rainbow**, with an horrible thunder. And if the aforesaid ashes be put in a lamp, and be kindled, it shall appear that all the house is full of Serpents, **and this hath been proved of men of late time.**

The English branches of the above astrological herbals are as widespread as sage itself is. Unfortunately, its peak seems to lie ahead of the period discussed here. The *Liber aggregationis*, for instance, is first attested c.1548 printed by Copland. This version is obviously much closer to the Machlinia text than to Draelants' edition. Synonyms for *salvia* (or *salgea*) are *colori(c)o(n)* or *clam(i)or*, where the edition has *gallorrio* and *olarior*. The fowl it produces becomes vermin with a tail like a nightingale; this is so incredible that recent authorities are related at the end. Another interesting crux is the rainbow. The Latin manuscripts provide *ictus*, *istius* <locus> or *histris*; the English translator failed to find the latter (*hystrix* means a porcupine), then substituted for it *iris*, rainbow. Neither the nomenclature nor the qualities have been found in previous attestations; it should also be noted that *salvia* does not appear in Albertus' original text on *De vegetabilibus*.²⁸⁶ Apart from the astrological context, a fascination with magic seems to resurface after centuries of more scholastic interest; this tendency would remain present in herbals well into modern times.²⁸⁷

V.ii A2. Alexius Affricus, *Tractatus de septem herbis septem planetis attributis*.

D. Singer (1928).

[*Intr. Inc.:*] Alexius Affricus discipulus Bolbenis claudet attoniensis et epilogoiticis studium continuare et finem cum laude. Post ecciam antiquorum Kyrannidorum volumina tibi nota et Arpocracio consodali tuo relatione inueni in civitate Troyana in monumento inclusum presentem libellum cum ossibus primi regis Kyranidis qui compendium intitulum eo quod per distinctionem perfectam a maiorum Kyranidis voluminis cum diligencia compillatum studio vehementi tractat de septem herbis septem planetis attributis... [*Expl.:*] ... Et quia per effectum velocem divina patet natura ipsarum herbarum sicut patet in subsequentibus.

[*Op. Inc.:*] Herba prima attributa soli est solsequium. Solsequium herba est omnibus nota. Collige ergo huius herbe flores folia et radices mense Junii hora diei sexta... [*Expl.:*] ... propter virtutem dicte compositionis. Serva hoc munus excellentissimum a deo divinitus datum de secretis Kyrannidarum voluminum in quo studebis et perficies inveniendone finem laudabilem. Preceptum autem Ypocratis est quod serves illud et non doceas quemquam quia istud nulli reveles.

²⁸⁶ Jessen (1867), 449.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Houwen (forthcoming a) on Enenkel and Smith (2007).

IMEP VIII (1991). Alexius Affricus, *De septem herbis* [Oxford, All Souls College 81 (4)]. Alaxus affrike disciple of robert claddere of the worthye studie of archiment hath longe contreyde and made a notable ende and a praysable aftyr the actual and fructfull bokes of kyrannes the whiche was felowe in þat tyme to ypocras the grete leche and clerke this present boke here... Solsequile idest gooldis ys an herbe to all men knowyng... **Sauge** is a goodly herbe... The precepts of the greet clerke Ypocras was that this kunnyngge shuld be kepte priuee and cloos and not taughte ner shewed to noo maniere man ner wyman saue oonlye to secrete and well disposed men etcetera.

Alexius Affricus' text is better attested in English, occurring in five separate manuscripts. That its attribution is complex is clear from all the names: Belenus Claudius Atheniensis becomes Robbert Claddere of Archiment; Alexius, Alaxus or Alexandrinus.²⁸⁸ Moreover, the text is usually annexed to alchemical literature. In Glasgow UL, Ferguson 205 and British Library, Sloane 353, Alexius forms the second *Book of Quintessence*, followed by ps.-Albertus Magnus' *Semita recta*; both manuscripts seem to be by the same scribe.²⁸⁹ Likewise, Oxford, All Souls College 81 has a *Liber de consideratione quintae essentiae*, attributed to Johannes de Rupescissa, before Alexius, which is called the *Tertius liber de generalibus remediis et de aliis secretis secretorum*. Another source of confusion is the identity of plants and planets. In Sloane 73, of a different transmission inc. *Alexandrinus Africus disciple of Belbenis found in the city of Troy in the grave of the first*, sage is the last of seven plants, linked to Saturn. Sloane 2948 has only five planets, omitting the sun and moon, and also linking sage to Saturn; promptly followed by a list of plants and planets attributing sage to Sol.²⁹⁰ Voigts also includes sage as an alternative under Mercury; eupatorium, earlier on identified with sage, is an alternative to Jupiter. At the end of the text the astrological is combined with the religious, in that during its gathering the passion of Christ must be mentioned; Thorndike notes that one manuscript added, "Do not put credulity in them beyond due measure." This advice may apply to the entire treatise; by now sage has been annexed to the mystical corpus of secretive literature, reminiscent of Egyptian practice, instead of the open lore of herbalist texts.

4.3. Printed testimonia

At the time that the astrological Alexius is circulating in manuscript, the first printed texts appear, firmly rooted in the manuscript herbals. Aside from the publication of the Latin and Arab tracts, the first herbal compilations to appear are issued in Germany between the years 1484 and 1491. The 1484 Latin *Herbarius* lists *salvia* or *selbe* without additional synonyms, but with its humour. The usages are a collection of all that has been written, with much overlap as a result. The nerves and paralysis part corresponds with *Circa*; the sinews with the *Vertues*; the teeth with *Agnus*. Use for the phlegm, head and stomach are similar to Hildegard, who also listed the German synonym. The decoction of leaves and branches for urines, menstrua and abortion is both in plant parts and in qualities Dioscuridean, as are uses for venomous bites, dyeing of hair, staunching of blood and genitalia. Most of these qualities are then repeated from another source, possibly Pliny, including abscesses. Finally, the creation of serpents seen in the *Liber aggregationis* is said to be attested by *magi*; sources named at the end of the extract are Matthaueus Silvaticus' *Pandecta* and Albertus.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ Thorndike (1923), 233; Belenus is a bastardisation of one Apollonius while Claudius was originally the addressee.

²⁸⁹ Keiser (1998), 3629, 3791; eVK 806; Halversen's dissertation (1998) could unfortunately not be accessed.

²⁹⁰ Voigts (2008), 38; the second part is related to the geocentric tradition of the *Alexander* strand of the herbal genre. Note that D. Singer (1928) misses the marginal note [Sol] attributing Sage to Saturn in London, British, Sloane 2948.

²⁹¹ The *Herbarius* rightly calls the creature a bird with a serpentine tail, but unfortunately substitutes *albam* for *alas*.

The German text in the 1485 *Gart der gesundheit* also gives Greek *eliffagus* and Arab *geliffagos*; it then states that *lilifagus* is tame sage and *eupatorium* wild sage. It cites sources by their names, i.e. Serapion, Pliny, Dioscorides, Paulus Aegineta; *Circa* and Platearius are seen as separate texts. The 1491 Latin *Hortus*, ch.404, repeats most information giving chapters for many sources used; at the end it adds *Macer*, which it cites almost verbatim, only changing *elelisphacus* to *elysifacos*.

4.3.1. *Banckes's herbal*

App. 2 I

Banckes 1525 (=1526)

H.iiib ¶ Saluia. ¶ Sage is **hote** in the fyrst degre 7 dry in the seconde degre. The leues **onely** be taken in medycynes bothe grene and dry. He may be kepte a yere. **Of sage** there be **.ii. maners** / Sage of the garden 7 wylde Sage. If thou wyll haue Sage **for** medycynes take þ^e leues of garden Sage for Sage of the garden consumeth more 7 conforteth than the other dothe. For þ^e Palsy sethe the leues of sage in wyne and vse to drynke it. Also for the same / sethe þ^e leues in wyne and playster it to the greuauce. Also it is good to put in sawce. Also the strangury / the flux / and the **matryce** it clenseth. Sethe the leues in water and let the pacyent **sytte** ouer it 7 receyue the hote fume of it / 7 it shal do hym moche good. Also it is good for venym or poyson. Sethe Sage in ale or wyne 7 vse to drynke it **.iii dayes** 7 thou **shalbe** hole by the grace of god. For þ^e stomake drynke the ioyce of Sage with water 7 Hony. Also it is good to clense a **mannes** body to vse it bothe rype 7 grene. It wyll make a **mannes** body clene / therefore who that vseth to **ete** of this herbe or drynke it / it is meruayle that **any inconuenyence** shulde greue them that vse it. Also yf **a man** haue an ytchyng / wasshe the ytchyng well with the ioyce of this herbe 7 it shall slee **þ^e ytchyng soone**. Also drynke Sage with wyne and a lytell **worwode** [sic] 7 and it shall cease the ache vnder the sydes / the wombe / 7 the stomake. It is good for the dropsy and the palsy.

The first print copy of English sage is in the 1525 *Banckes's herbal*. This text is said to be derived from *Agnus castus*, but the second half of the alphabet is informed by *Macer* as well. The degrees at the beginning are rather reminiscent of *Circa instans*, however, as is the mention of dry and green leaves and the distinction of two sorts. Similarly with the qualities, *Circa instans* is the closest cognate: use for palsy (sodden and plastered), strangury, flux and period (sodden in water) correspond with *Circa*, as does the cleansing of the body. Aches of the side, womb and stomach (drunken with wine) are related in the *Virtues off herbes*, followed by palsy and dropsy. A usage against venom (sodden in ale) is akin to that in the *Tretys* as is that against general inconvenience, while itching is clearly like *Agnus*. Only once, at the virtue for venom, is the grace of God to be invoked. The other editions of *Banckes's* differ only in wording. From Copland 1552, a chapter on herb infusions including sage states “Water of Saugle, is good for ye Palsye”, a spelling else unattested. Note also that the index of some of the Copland editions mentions the plant as *salua*. The alternate version of Wyer 1540 mentions sage in the making of the ‘aqua-vite perfectissima’.

4.3.2. *Grete herball*

App. 2 II

Treueris 1526 (=1529)

y.ii ¶ De Saluia. Sawge. Ca. CCCC.vi.

Sawge is hote in the fyrst degre / 7 drye in the seconde. The leues and floures be good in medycyne. There be .ii. maners of it. The tame / and the wylde / þ^t is called eupatory. Sawge is good in medycyns grene 7 drye / but the grene is best. It may be kept one yere. whan ye fynde in receptes to take sawge it is the co[m]mune or tame sawge. But whan ye fynde eupatorium or

lilifagus it is wylde sawge. The tame conforteth more than the wylde / but the wylde vnstoppeth the pypes more than the tame / and hath nerest vertue to castoreum in confortynge synewes. The wyne that sawge is soden in is good for them þ^t haue the fallynge euyll. Bathe made of water that it is soden in is good to helpe lette of vryne / and to cause floures to renne and to clense the matryce The sawce made of sawge / percely / vyneygre with a lytell peper is good to conforte the appetyte that is febled by colde humours in the stomake.

A comparison of *Banckes's* with the 1526 *Grete herball* makes clear that their differences are minor. This is understandable seeing how the latter also depends on *Circa* in degrees, varieties and gathering (though the *Grete* includes the flowers as usable). The spelling *sawge*, as well as its synonyms *eupatorium* and *lilifagus*, form further proof thereof; these are not named in *Banckes*, which is in this respect slightly less elaborate and more practical. Fresh and dry leaves, the latter to be kept a year, are also named, but there is more discourse on botany, and accordingly less on powers. Its use for the sinews, epilepsy (the falling evil), urine, menstrua or womb, as well as the appetite are all in *Circa* but with less explanation of preparation purpose; still, palsy is not named. The divide between the two texts is slight but visible in the last recipe, less explicit in *Grete* than *Circa*. There are no notable divergences between the three separate editions of the *Grete herball*.

4.3.3 William Turner, *Names of herbs and New herbal*

App. 2 III

William Turner, *Names of herbs*. [Myerdman for] Day and Seres 1548

F.viiiib Saluia. Saluia is called in greeke Elelisphacos, in englishe sage or sauge, in duche salbey or selue, in french saulge. It heateth and somthyng stoppeth.

William Turner, *New herbal*. Myerdman 1551

X.vi SALuia is called in Greke Elilisphacos / in English Sage or Sauig / in Duche Salben or Selue / in Frenche Saulge. | Sage is a long bushe full of bowes and braunches / hauing twigges four square / somthyng whytish / and leaues lyke the Quince tre / but longer / rougher / thicker / and priuely resembling horenes of a worne cloth / whyte vnder / smellinge wonderfully / but the smell is greuous / it hath sede lyke the wilde horminum in the top of the stalke / it groweth in rough places / Hitherto Dioscorides. | Dioscorides maketh but one kinde of Sage / but Theophrast maketh two kindes of Sage / one wyth a rougher / and the other wyth a smoother leafe / but nowe are there founde more kindes / the whyche though they differ one from an other muche in roughnes / and smoothnes in greatnes and smallines / and in diuersite of coloures / yet in my iudgement / they do agre al in one vertue and propertye / and although som be stronger then other some be. | The vertues of Sage. | The broth wherein þ^e leaues and branches are sodden / dryue fourth water / and bring furth floures / and draweth furth the byrth / and it healeth the pricking of the fishe / called in Latin pastinaca marina / whych is lyke vnto a flath / with venemous prickes about hys taylor: It maketh heyre black / it is good for woundes / it stoppeth the blood / and scoureth wilde sores / the broth of the leaues and the braunches wyth wine stancheth the iche of the priuites / if they be washed therewith. | Out of Galene. | Galene writeth that Sage is of an euident hote complexion / and something binding. | The vertues of Sage out of Aetius. | The heating poure of sage is euidently knowen / but the binding vertue is but small / but som wryte that if a perfume be made of sage ouer the coles / that it will stop the excessiue flowing of womens floures: But Agrippa writeth that sage beyng a holy herbe / is eaten of lionesses beyng wyth yong / for it holdeth and stayeth the liuely byrth. Wherfor if a woman drinke a pounce of the iuyce of it wyth a litle salte / at a certayne tyme / whiche Phisicionen can tell / if she do lye

wyth her husbnde / vndoutingly she shall conceyue. They saye when as the pestilence was in a place of Egypt / called Coptos / that they that remayned alyue after the pestilence / compelled theyr wiues to drinke much of thys iuyce: and so they had in short tyme great encrease of chyldren. Orpheus sayeth that two cyates of the iuyce of sage with one vnce of honye / if it be geuen vnto a man with drink fasting / will stoppe the spitting of blood: but it is good agaynst the tysick and exulceration of þ^e lunges. If it be dressed thus / take of spiknarde two drames of the sede of sage perched / beaten / and sifted xiiii. drames / of pepper xii. drames / menge all these together in the iuyce of sage / and make pilles thereof / and geue a dram at a tyme / in the morning to the patient fasting / and so much against night / and drinke water after the pilles.

Turner's 1548 *Names of herbs* collects the synonyms of sage, namely *elilisphacos*, *saluia*, *salbey* or *selue* in German and *saulge* in French.²⁹² In the 1551 *New herbal* these have changed to *elilisphacos* in Greek, *salben* in German and *sauig* in English indicating the lack of uniformity.²⁹³ The description of the herb is, as stated, directly derived from Dioscurides, a translation predating the 1655 text by John Goodyer. The two varieties out of Theophrastus return too, but Turner says that species do not differ in qualities. Where in the 1548 text he merely stated that "it heateth and somthyng stoppeth", the new text attributes this fact to Galen and invokes other authorities from the usual properties in Dioscurides to Aetius, Agrippa and Orpheus. Aetius of Amida (c.500) only repeats Galen's heating and stopping, and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (c.1530) merely mentions the superstitious use for stimulating childbirth. The reference to the school of Orpheus is hard to trace, but spitting of blood, coughing and ulcers are all also mentioned by Dioscurides, if partly under the herb *bechion* (*tussilago*). The final recipe is also untraced but reminiscent of those in the *Circa*. All in all it is clear that Turner is largely dependent on the established herbal traditions; he derives directly from mediaeval sources without adding any noticeable observation of his own. Furthermore, spurious sources from the school of Orpheus and contemporary compilations which add little to the tradition are juxtaposed with genuine texts and even a legend is not below Turner; on the basis of this sage extract his reputation as the father of English botany appears undeserved.

4.3.4. Thomas Paynell, tr. *Regimen sanitatis*

App. 2 VI

Berthelet 1528 L.v [Herbes holsome to put in drynke.]

Saluia cum ruta faciunt tibi pocula [t]uta.

Adde rose florem minuit potenter amorem.

L.viii [To make a common sauce.]

Saluia / sal / vinum / piper / allea / petrocilium.

Ex his fit salsa / nisi sit *commixio* falsa.

U.i-iii [The bounte of sage]

Cur moritur homo / cui saluia crescit in horto?

Contra vim mortis non est medicamen in hortis.

Saluia confortat neru[o]s / manumque tremorem

Tollit / et eius ope febris acuta fugit

Saluia / castoreum lauendula / premula veris

²⁹² 'Duche' must mean German, as the synonyms are the same as in Hildegard; the *MED* also supports such a usage.

²⁹³ The last form is unattested elsewhere. Note that Gerard's *Herbal* (1597) is, in turn, largely derived from Turner's.

Nastur athanasia sanant paralitica membra.
Saluia saluatrix natura consiliatrix.

Paynell's translation of the *Regimen sanitatis Salerni*[*tatum*] or *Flos medicinae* attributed to Johannes de Mediolano thrice cites sage at some length accompanying the original Latin verse. The first is against ill drink: the leaves of sage comfort the sinews and brain against a toxic fume. The second is in making a sauce, especially good for goose or pig in that it extracts excess fluids. The third is the actual section on sage, only seven verses in Latin, but three full pages in English. In an almost Biblical exegesis the translator expounds each verse while citing several authorities. Two proverbial lines singing sage's praises are corroborated by way of Avicenna, who says this herb prevents putrefaction and humoral imbalance of the body. The verses have older origins.²⁹⁴ Three specific virtues of sage are then extolled: comforting the sinews by the drying of humour; taking away tremor by comforting the sinews; and the easing of aches by the drying of humour. The remedies are neither innovative nor elaborate; the same also occur in Brunschwig's book.²⁹⁵ Further uses with wine are against palsy and epilepsy and to stimulate the appetite, also not very new; six subsequent herbs, including sage, are adduced against palsy by authority of Avicenna. Only at this point does the translator identify a second species of sage, noble sage or *silifagus*; the text ends with epithets to sage which will later on confound further the nomenclature issue. All in all Paynell adds very little of use to the *Regimen*, which itself adds little to the herbal tradition. A tendency is visible for the plant properties to become more general, corresponding to the nature of regiments as valetudinarian. The lines are little more than one-liners, maxims that could almost be chanted rather than put to use. Confusion of names and qualities limits use as herbal medicine.

4.3.5. William Bullein, *Government of health and Bulwark of defence*

App. 2 IX

Government of health

Day 1558 f.58v, K.iib

¶ **Iohn.**

What is Sage, for that I loue well?

¶ **Humfrey.**

[A wonderfull gift geuen to Sage] There be two kindes of sage: they be herbes of health, and therefore they be called Saluia, this herbe is hote & dry, & prouoketh vrine, clenseth ye matrix, stoppeth the bloud in a wou~de. If it be put in a pigge, it drieth the humours, that would enge~der fleume, it is good againste the palsie: oftentimes eaten, or sodden in wyne, it wyll helpe & clense ytche, scabs, and fylth from the pudent and secret me~bers. Aetius doth greatlye commende this herbe, and the excellent regiment of Salern, where it sayeth Cur moritur homo, cui saluia crescit in horto, enquiring why men do die that haue Sage growyng in gardens. [An. in. 3. 1 cap. sing.] But trewlye, neyther Phisicke, herbe, nor running, can make man immortall: but assuredlye Sage is holsome for olde folkes, to be put in to their meates, for it clenseth fleame from the senewes, which fleame will relaxe the synewes: The wyne of Sage dronke vpo~ an empty stomake, is holsome for flegmatike persones, or them whiche haue the fallynge sickenes or dropsie.

Thirty years after the first edition of Paynell's *Regimen of health*, Bullein issues his own

²⁹⁴ Cf. Alfred's Proverbia, II.10, 166-68: Nis no wurt woxen / on woode ne on felde, / þet euure muge þe lif up helde.

²⁹⁵ The 1527 *Vertuose boke of distyllacyon* (tr. L. Andrewe) mentions palsy, including sinews or tremor, and jaundice.

Government of health, where the properties of herbs are put into dialogue. Curiously, the contents of the text form a close summary of the English *Regimen*. Two kinds of *salvia* are mentioned, but not named or contrasted with synonyms. The use for urines, the womb, stopping blood and itches appear to be of Dioscuridean origin; its function in food and for palsy correspond to the *Regimen*, as does epilepsy; dropsy is probably from *Banckes*. The proverbs derive from Aetius (cf. Turner) and the regiment of Salerno. Compared to the latter, this entry is an entirely unimaginative work.

Bulwark of defence [Prose summary]

T.Marshe 1578 (J.Kingston 1562), Fol.5rv, A.v

Sage, known to Marcellus by name because it grows in his garden and is used in his kitchen. Particularly good for increasing women's fertility; Hillarius recounts the story of how - after a devastating plague in 'a Citie of Eyp't', which left few alive, the city was quickly repopulated because the remaining women - besides having 'the helpe of man' - drank 'the wine, or iuce of Sage' (5r). Bullein draws on his own experience, as - in the persona of Hillarius - he records how a pill (of sage, spikenard, ginger, pepper, aster) helped him during a 'great sicknesse in Suffolke, where some time I dwelled' (5v). Records how 'the great learned fathers of Salarn, did write these wordes to the late famous Prince kyng Henry the eight, in the laude therof sayng, Cur moritur homo, cui saluia Crescit in horto? Inquerynge why mortall men should die, whiche haue Sage in their Gardens, but because no herbe hath power to make men immortal: they say furthermore, Contra vim mortis non Crescit medicina in hortis' (No medicine against the power of death grows in the garden).

Just four years later Bullein issues a new medicinal dialogue titled the *Bulwark of defence* rehearsing the same sources and adding some. Synonyms are rendered as *elelisphacon* and *salvia* but Theophrastus' *sphacon* is called *sphacelo*. The description of the herb is from the last source, with Matthiulus' identification of the male and female varieties; surprisingly, some provenance is also mentioned. According to the text Aetius and Galen have sage hot and dry and stopping flux; Agrippa has it cleanse the matrix and ease conception; Orpheus recites a recipe to stop the blood. That these uses are copied from Turner is clear by the same example of a plague-ridden Egyptian city. Another remedy against abscesses called 'Tabes' corresponds to the one in the *New Herbal*; other virtues against disuria, phlegm, wind, dropsy, palsy, sinews and blood are also reminiscent. To the use for genital itches is added one for mouth sores; it is taken too to dry up roast pig meat. The chapter closes with the same proverbs as above, adding its helpfulness against epileptic fits; the final recipe is one for sage ale, including squinance, spikenarde, calamus, fennell and betony. The prose summary shows that the *Bulwark* is just the *Governance* updated by the *New Herbal*. However, since Turner's text did little more than compile manuscript information, its derivatives are mere third-rate recensions; Renaissance herbals in general are not much above manuscripts.

4.3.6. Thomas Elyot, *Castle of health* and Andrew Boorde, *Dietary of health*

App. 2 X

Berthelet 1539 ch. II.9, f.27. a, D.iii

Rape rotes and Nauews. Cap. 9. Sauge.

It heateth, and somewhat byndeth, and therwith prouoketh vrine, the decoction of the leaues and braunches beinge druncke. Also it stoppeth bleedyng of woundes, beinge layde vnto them. Moreouer it hath ben proued, that women, whiche haue ben longe tyme without childerne, and haue drunke. r. ounces of the iuyce of sauge, with a grayne of salte, a quarter of an houre before, that they haue companied with theyr husbandes, haue conceyued at that tyme. It is hotte and drye

in the thyrde degree, the vsynge therof is good agaynst palseyes. ¶ Digestyues of fleume.

The heating and binding properties of sage in Elyot's *Castle of health* are from the *Names of herbs*; the use of leaves and branches for urines and to stop blood is of Dioscuridean in origins. Ease of conception is attested in Turner or Bullein, and the same holds for its usage against palsy. Only its definition as hot and dry in the third degree is an addition compared to the text of Turner. Further derived from this stage of herbal lore is an entry for sage in Boorde's *Regiment of health*:

App. 2 VIII

Wyer 1542 Ch. xx, K.ii

¶ Of sauge. and Mandragod.

¶ Sauge is good to helpe a woman to conceyue, and doth prouoke vr[y]ne.

4.4. Verified virtues of sage

“I merely complained of a stomachache and then got Verywell to eat some sage and throw up all over the porch, and then pretended it was mine – pretended I had eaten the sage and the mouse bones and the dog food.” – Reif Larsen, *The Selected Works of T.S. Spivet* (2009)

The further history of sage evidently shows the amalgamation of traditions and transmission. The herbals of the German ‘fathers of botany’ starting with Brunfels’ famous illustrations (1530) still followed the mediaeval herbals in the contents. Bock (1539) considers sage virtually unequalled, because of its use in medicine and cooking, for the rich and the poor.²⁹⁶ In Gerard’s herbal (1597) the description of sage is literally that of Dioscurides²⁹⁷ while Parkinson (1633) distinguishes two sorts of sage, the lesser and greater, of which the lesser (to wit *Salvia officinalis* L) is the better. A mediaeval Christian legend²⁹⁸ about sage protecting Mary and the infant Jesus from the soldiers of Herodes is illustrated by Albrecht Altdorfer (1480-1538); hence it was called ‘mother of herbs’. Around the same time Paracelsus (1493-1541) made sage the ‘herb of immortality’, and used it in his doctrine of signatures;²⁹⁹ its hairy leaves were good for tongue and skin, as its scent freshened saliva and blood. Contrary to his predecessors, Paracelsus attributed ‘harmonious’ sage to Jupiter. The spiritual successor of Paracelsus, Nicholas Culpeper, combined such a signature of sage with sympathetic magic (1651). At that time sage was used for the so-called Four Thieves’ Vinegar, a concoction of lavender, rosemary and thyme against the plague of 1630; this is perhaps echoed in a folk song popularised in the 1960s.³⁰⁰ Thus the hundred years after Brunfels show several sages, initially firmly rooted in the mediaeval herbal, but gradually more magical and incredible in kind.

Only around 1990 are the biochemical properties of sage tested in clinical and laboratory study. Over sixty active components are now identified. Most important are aetheric oils (which inhibit bacteria, vira and fungi); polyphenols (antioxidants and antiradical); triterpenoids (against inflammation); flavonoids (for the nerves); minerals (for the metabolism) and acid (preservative). These elements are found in different doses in plant parts; the leaves are used most, while flowers

²⁹⁶ Hieronymus Bock, *New Kreütterbuch* (1539): Unter allen Stauden ist kaum ein Gewächs über den Salbei erhaben, denn er dient den Ärzten, den Köchen, den Armen und Reichen gleichermaßen.

²⁹⁷ Great Sage is very full of stalkes, foure square, of a woody substance, parted into branches, about the which grow broad leaves, long, wrinkled, rough, whitish, very like to the leaves of wilde Mullein, but rougher, and not so white, like in roughnesse to woollen cloath thread-bare...

²⁹⁸ Bönnhoff (2004), 18, 65.

²⁹⁹ Kelley (2007), 8, 25. The doctrine of signatures is also called phytognomy.

³⁰⁰ Kintzios (2000), 10. The ballad the song is based on is traditionally linked to love, death and a warding off of evil.

are used cosmetically, its roots as a tranquilliser, its seed as an emollient, its oil to make perfume. Varieties of sage also have different operations; menstrual, antifebrile, antidysenteric or antidotal properties are stronger in *S. officinalis* than in *S. triloba*.³⁰¹ This has to do with varietal changes in the proportion of thujone and camphor in garden sage and Greek sage, the two that are used most. More importantly, sage seems to work syncratically, in that its combined elements have operation beyond the separate parts. This is surprisingly similar to Paracelsus' 'spagyric' herbal properties, claiming that medicine works through body (solid plant parts), soul (oils), and spirit (alcohol).³⁰² His cherished sage -as a herb of medicinal and culinary value, as a focal point of herbal, religious, alchemical, astrological, humoral and magical virtues- embodies the whole of herbalist traditions.

4.5. Conclusion

The earliest Egyptian virtues attached with *anusi*, sage, are against itches and for fertility, as well as against snakebite and other evil spirits. Dioscurides names the flux, wounds, ulcer, itches and dyeing hair. Pliny has rather similar uses, but attributes coughs, side-pains and serpent stings to another plant, *tussilago*. The *Herbarium Apuleii* only has itching of the genitals and of the anus. German and Italian sources are partly dependent upon classical origins, partly of separate origins. The English texts derive from this tradition, either directly or via the school of Salerno. Whereas *Macer* corresponds closely to Dioscurides, the *Tretys* and *Vertues* do not conform fully to *Macer*; *Circa* compares only in part to Dioscurides, *Agnus* only in part to *Circa*, and *Liber* most to *Circa*. Two trends are noticeable in these traditions: one, texts said to derive from important sources are rarely derived directly and exclusively from them; two, the derivations become more like recipes. The reason for this process is perhaps that compilations are made from intermediary sources like recipe collections, rather than from the major works to which they claim to conform. Mediaeval attitudes toward authorship allowed for more flexible crediting of the source material. To say a text is based on another might mean that it is merely written in the same tradition and hoped to form a worthy follow-up on it, similar to the attribution of apocryphal texts to a famous author. It is therefore preferable to see texts as individual witnesses rather than as recension of one original.

Other treatises are concerned with gathering and application of sage and its extracted use. These herbal texts are interspersed with recipes, charms, religious invocations and superstitions; to the users of these compilations all parts would contribute to the workings of the natural world. However, a tendency is visible for herbals to become more general in description and properties, and more fantastical in material. As the writers of the Renaissance tried to distinguish facts from fancy in the mediaeval tradition, legendary material would nonetheless be reported as a curiosity, which would live on to form either its own tradition or a part of the new interest in spiritual texts. As a result, herbal lore would be marginalised in botanical texts, and diluted in astrological ones. In terms of herbal nomenclature, Theophrastus' *elelisphacos* quickly degenerates into *lilifagus*; *salvia* is rendered as *salgia*, *saulge*, *sauge*, *sawge* and sage. Connected to the latter process is a vast variety of local and exotic subspecies, whose virtues are confounded in the name of *Salvia* L. Botanical grounds for disambiguation are rarely supplied since the Greek prototypical herbarium. This confusion and amalgamation of species and varieties would mean that the medicinal quality of sage would vary considerably between different texts and localities. This, too, might contribute to the deterioration of the medicinal herbal. Without clear description, the texts no longer function as a guide for harvesting herbs, so that medicine is made once again by professionals and quacks.

Like the manuscripts, the early herbal prints are based on the classical texts, mostly *Circa*;

³⁰¹ Tucker (2004), 735.

³⁰² Bönnhoff (2004), 23.

synonyma are less important than the virtues, some of which are magical or astrological in nature, and others invoke the aid of God. Unlike in the manuscript tradition, sources are often named and cited verbatim to provide an overview of classical lore, even if other printers perform piracies that distort source material. The first, *Banckes's herbal*, mostly *Circa*, appears in a score of subgroups; sage never shows abnormalities. The *Grete herball* differs much less than was expected with only slightly more attention to botany. Again, a reason for the differences is found in the transmissions. *Banckes* is a compilation of English manuscripts, whereas *Grete* is a translation of a French print. In the era of printing, a consultation of sources is more standard issue to the Renaissance editors. Where the *Grete herball* may just be a more careful text, the information is basically the same as *Banckes*. The former does try to distinguish between varieties of sage in a more scientific manner. The difference between the two texts is not so much in contents but more in marketing technique. The *Grete herball*, popular on the continent, was larger and illustrated, making it more expensive. *Banckes* would have been cheaper, more practical to handle and it was by far more the successful. The consequence is that herbal literature would lose some of its application in real medicinal use, to become more of a literary interest and a curiosity; this is indeed the course of the other herbals.

The *Regimen sanitatis* is based on the Salernitan text, if much expanded; its uses concern general health and diet more than herbal medicine. Also derived from the *Regimen* are Boorde's *Regiment of health*, Bullein's dialogue *Government of health* and the updated *Bulwark of defence*. Like many other texts, the latter is based on *Turner's herbal*. Usually seen as an innovative work of the Renaissance, this treatise is actually a compilation of classical and mediaeval sources and synonyms, only more complete and more structured than the others. Elyot's *Castle of health*, for example, takes its sources from Turner rather than from the original. In this way the *New herbal* becomes a new landmark as a compilation rather than an innovation; it is a link in the chains of derivation. Its successors either reduce their contents to proverbial lines, or they take the course of magical and astrological lore. Apart from its properties, some returning recipes and anecdotes attest to the legendary nature of sage. Over the century after the first printed English herbal, this tendency combines with alchemy, astrology and chemistry to give a glimpse of the future of the herbal, where its parts are diluted but still working. Modern science not only affirms the uses of individual sage subspecies and their constituents, but even their varying activity in the course of a year or a day. This lends credence to the theory that herbalism is based in empiricism transmitted both in word and writing, its currents may mingle with science but they also run their own course.

5. Epilogue

“Farewell to sage and sassafras and corn dodger pills” – Woody Guthrie, *State of Arkansas* (1941)

The origins of herbal literature lie in the gathering and harvesting of herbs for nurture and health. Oral lore would only later be preserved in writing and as such transmitted over time and space. In different periods and localities herbalism combined with other occupations as magic, medicine or religion. As a result different aspects of the tradition are highlighted in individual witnesses, e.g. nomenclature, synonyma, description, habitat, gathering, qualities, or magico-medical attributes. Herbal material travels with the wind to fertilise new localities with the old names and properties. As a result a name may be given to a different plant or the same plant receive new characteristics. In the spread of herbalism from Egypt to Greece and Rome, both through exchange and conquest, a plant such as sage was known by dozens of different names resembling at least four subspecies. While magic charms are inescapably intertwined with herbal medicine on the manuscript page, it is not to be forgotten that folklore is often just a veneer over herbal efficacy accumulated in time. The presence of magical ritual, pagan rite or Christian formula does not take away from the lore

of plants and medicines, while suggestion and placebo are in themselves added healing benefits.

In 1557 printers were incorporated into the Stationers' Company, established in 1403 as a union of manuscript makers. In effect printing was now bound by state and church to copyrights before any publication. This restriction of piracies and protection of privileges redefined printing as a trade of patronages and bespoke productions, much like manuscripts had been before c.1400. In this century-and-a-half the markets for manuscripts and prints had indeed merged to one mass. Apart from the merging markets of manuscripts and prints it should be remembered that a text is rarely an exact copy of one exemplar. For mediaeval literature it is more profitable to consider a text as a new recension of existing material, whereby every copyist creates his own compilation. At the same time these compilations should be seen in the light of their total contents, so that the manuscript or printed context of one treatise can illuminate the intentions of authors and readers. The description of some specific witnesses clarifies the correspondences between the two media. The complicated transmission of manuscripts and prints can clearly be seen in the major herbals. *Macer De viribus herbarum* (c.1100) is known in English in at least three translations or editions; *Circa instans* (c.1150) continues to influence printed herbals as late as the late-sixteenth century; *Agnus castus* (late-14C) is issued some twenty times between 1525 and 1560 as *Banckes's herbal*. These traditions are themselves conflated in various copies or juxtaposed in multiple manuscripts.

Reasons for a late arrival of English printed herbals lie partly in the success of continental editions, partly in the continued transmission of manuscripts, but also in the need for vernacular medicine to establish itself as a selling point. In the next decades inexpensive issues flooded the market, until the genre diverged into botany such as Turner's herbal or astrology like Culpeper's. In the sixteenth century, though, the herbal played a role in the rise of vernacular self-medication. The in-depth description of the primary prints also shows that textual affiliations ought not to be ignored in the classification and dating of copies. Not only may different editions derive from different sources, the main text, glosses and indices can also arrive from separate transmissions. While the two main texts, *Banckes* and *Grete herball*, do not differ as much as is often supposed, other, later compilations combine old and newer knowledge and accentuate alchemy or astrology. Just like the manuscript miscellany consciously incorporated herbals into a context of charms and medicine, the printed compilation and the fount of individual printers show a conscious choice to print vernacular herbal literature. The idiosyncratic nature of the witnesses indicates that readers could receive their books catered to their tastes, whether handwritten or from moveable presses.

The issues in herbal literature described in general above are exemplified in the study of sage. Nomenclature is maintained between different subspecies or variable within one species, to the point that the virtues of *tussilago* are added to those of sage based on an overlap in synonyms. Even names copied from classical sources are mutilated; witness *elelisphacon* becoming *lilifagus*. The standard virtues of sage are found in Dioscurides: diuretic, anti-inflammatory, astringent and antibacterial. These are largely different from the uses in mediaeval herbals of the German monks such as Strabo, Hildegard and Albertus, showing the local variance in venerable herbal traditions. The early English treatises take from either of these traditions, while adding local lore and magic. The section on sage in *Macer* is largely derived from Dioscurides while the *Vertues off herbes* are much closer to the *Macer* than the *Tretys of diverse herbis* is. The latter has virtues corresponding to the German herbal tradition and is often surrounded by recipes dealing among others with sage including a charm in which religious phrases written on sage leaves heal through being ingested. The *Circa* is interesting for its synonyms, which show the problems of a derivative transmission, and for its botanical clues, which are remarkably accurate. While the *Liber de diversis medicinis* has recipes resembling the contents of *Circa*, the section in *Agnus castus* seems closer to *Macer*.

Sage is also present in a number of treatises on gathering herbs and astrological treatises,

in most of which the text is interconnected with other herbal literature. Two texts by ps.-Albertus and Alexius attest to the mingling of astrology, folklore, herbalism and religion with superstition. The printed witnesses are often more inclusive and explicit of the sources of the herbal tradition. *Banckes's herbal* (1525) is found to correspond more closely to *Circa* than previously imagined, while the *Grete herbal* (1526) is more similar to *Banckes* than thought. Turner's herbal is in turn not as innovative as assumed, while his nomenclature reflects the confused sources of herbal lore. The regiments of the others English doctors are derivative of the School of Salerno, the herbal by Turner and each other. Their reworkings show the profit in lay medicine in the sixteenth century, and accompanying it the accumulated burden of legend and folklore associated with such a plant as *Salvia officinalis* L. Although the later history of the herbal text has separated superstition and scientific approaches, it is only modern laboratory tests that corroborated most of the operations of a plant like sage. Not just individual uses through time are confirmed, also the joint operation of different plant parts active at different periods in different subspecies. In one plant such as sage the whole of herbal lore in its context of genre, manuscript and printed transmission has surfaced.

It has been shown that the consideration of herbal traditions can be useful in investigating individual texts. The underlying elements of magic, medicine, folklore and religion are realised differently in every copy; previous treatises indirectly influence compilations, and manuscript or print contexts contribute to the understanding of the collection in its entirety. That even the early examples of herbal literature are not without a basis in efficacy is proven by laboratory research, and they therefore deserve investigation based on unbiased views. It has also been seen that the boundary between mediaeval and Renaissance cannot be a strict divide in the history of science. Early printed texts are just as much compilations of established lore as the mediaeval manuscript. Renaissance nomenclature is equally confusion as in the Middle Ages, the Linnaean system still a distant future. Older sources of herbal lore are named, but their properties are rarely questioned or tested. The rearrangement of existing material means a continuation of the mediaeval manuscript. On the other hand, the Renaissance writers were more in touch with one another, sharing varieties of plants for investigation, reacting to each other's work or travelling to see plants for themselves. If this did not lead directly to better textual transmissions, it did improve knowledge on varieties, their botanical description and their traditional attribution of real and imagined medicinal quality. As a result, herbalism split into a botanical and a magical strand, neither fully true to herbal lore.

The several sources and varieties of sage have, however, raised possibilities for new study. On the basis of the history of the genre, manuscript and print transmission, the case study on sage and the inventory in the appendix it will be possible to research different texts in additional depth. One suggestion, the cluster of astrological herbals on plants and planets may be used in the future for a research project on the position of the late Middle English herbal between c.1400 and 1600. In order for this to happen, the inventory of manuscripts and prints would need to be corroborated with the study of the actual primary sources; this would no doubt yield corrections and additions. Regardless, the combination of catalogues used in the appendix could provide the starting point for future study on any aspect of this subject. The position of herbalism within modern medicine merits further investigation of its transmission and tradition, and it is in addition a field especially suited to interdisciplinary studies in the fields of botany, chemistry, medicine, religion and so on. The choice to look at the herbal genre in combination with these related areas can provide insight into the history of science. In addition, the focus on the cross-roads of mediaeval and Renaissance may further study of the continuity between periods rather than a compartmentalising of science. The history of the herbal has shown that natural lore has been relevant to every time and place; as such, the future course for the herbal perfectly reflects its origins as a connecting factor in society.

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