

## ARTYKULY

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## THE TRANSMISSION OF THE *AGNUS CASTUS* HERBAL: FROM MANUSCRIPT TO EARLY PRINT

## ABSTRACT

This article aims at understanding how scientific writing was evolving from the medieval to the Early Modern times through the study of two copies of the same text belonging to both periods: the *Agnus Castus* Herbal. This text offers the possibility of studying the fluidity of this specific type of discourse in a time of a profound technological innovation, reflecting the way the texts were not only produced but also perceived. For those making decisions on how to present this old material to new readers and through a new medium, the influence of the new humanist views and the powerful middle-class may have influenced the final resolutions. The *Agnus Castus* Herbal was a very popular tract in the Middle Ages, a fundamental part of medical treatments at the time, and was probably still of great interest in the early sixteenth century. Its Early Modern English counterpart – published in 1525 – is the first Herbal printed in England.

KEYWORDS: manuscripts, *Agnus Castus* Herbal, materia medica, scientific English, Middle English, Early Modern English

## STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest zrozumienie jak piśmiennictwo naukowe ewoluowało od średniowiecza do czasów nowożytnych. Badanie oparte jest na dwóch kopiach zielnika (*Agnus Castus Herbal*), który powstał w obu badanych okresach. Analiza tego tekstu pozwala zaobserwować zmiany jakie zachodziły w tego typu tekstach, oraz jak zmiany technologiczne wpłynęły na produkcję oraz postrzeganie zielników. *Agnus Castus Herbal* był bardzo popularnym traktatem w średniowieczu i prawdopodobnie nadal cieszył się dużym zainteresowaniem na początku XVI wieku. Jego wczesnoangielski odpowiednik – wydany w 1525 r. – jest pierwszym zielnikiem wydrukowanym w Anglii.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: manuskrypty, *Agnus Castus* Herbal, materia medica, naukowy angielski, średnioangielski, wczesna angielszczyzna

## INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

In the study of the history of scientific writing, the transition from medieval to modern has received much attention. Recently we find integrated approaches to historical pragmatics – among other disciplines – focusing on specific aspects of

medical texts (Ratia, Suhr 2017). As part of a more traditional line of work, many editions of different texts have been produced, helping us to become better acquainted with texts in a particular time. This article focuses on the idea of a specific text in motion, and the peculiarities of its manuscript sources from the Early Modern period: how a particular text – a canonical herbal in this case – shows the evolution of a set of discursive features in the manuscript and how this has been used by the early modern printer to create a version that transpires the new modernity, in contrast with the previous more chaotic medieval arrangement and layout.

Among the most relevant sources for medicine in the period, herbals occupied a prominent place. Ingredients (or *simples*, as they were commonly known) were fundamental elements in the creation of the recipes for healing and well-being, and it was quite customary for practitioners to have several of these texts at hand. Among those who circulated extensively and had an important network of transmission are the *Circa Instans* or the *Agnus Castus* Herbal, which will be the object of our study. The function of these herbals was mainly practical, and although beautifully decorated copies or *herbaria* could also be found on the shelves of the nobility, the function of the texts was mainly to provide information and authority to the potential users and/or readers. However, the copies of the same text produced in the time of print reveal elements that may indicate a shift both in the textual function and in the use of the language, reflected in the arrangement of the material.

In order to demonstrate this, this article is organized in the following sections: section one provides an overview of the contextual aspects related to the history of medical literacy in its transition from medieval to early modern; section two focuses on the specific text under consideration, presenting its main peculiarities and the different sources available; section three provides data and analysis of the discursive and rhetorical features, while section four summarizes the main conclusions and proposes how to expand on this line of research in future prospects.

## MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC TEXTS: FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

The journey of the so-called *materia medica* from the classical nest to the European libraries is a fascinating one. In the case of botany, the reference work was Dioscorides, which echoed from its origin through the different translations and copies circulating in the Western medieval world. Morton (1981: 85) clearly refers to this:

Apart from the *Naturalis Historia* of Pliny, which continued to be known and quoted, at least in the West, among all who were learned in Latin, the Dioscoridean list of medicinal plants constituted, throughout the Middle Ages and even beyond, the one repository of plant knowledge, kept in circulation by constant copying, because it was the standard work on pharmacology used by the medical profession (Morton 1981: 85).

After the end of the classical period, the early Middle Ages are typically described as times of intellectual regression. In this context, text production was directed at the reproduction of authoritative texts, and there was no sign of scientific development other than replicating the previous material, Morton points out that the botanical science actually took steps back: “There is no hint of original observation or thought and no independent botanical writing.” (*ibidem*: 86). One of such copies, an abbreviated version of Dioscorides, became very popular under the name of *Herbarium Apuleii*, and was compiled around the 4<sup>th</sup> century by a *pseudoApuleius*. This tract circulated extensively, translated into different vernacular languages. Some copies of the treatise had plenty of drawings and illustrations, but others had none. We have to wait until the so-called “long twelfth” century, a moment for medical material to proliferate. During this period, which comprises the final decade of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 13<sup>th</sup>, the schools of Salerno, Toledo and Monte Cassino produced many translations of the main medical corpora which were to circulate in Europe. As Green (2008: 18) emphasizes: “As in other fields of intellectual activity, therefore, there is no question that there was indeed a “twelfth-century Renaissance” in medicine”.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the period of massive vernacularization, the vast majority of medical/scientific texts had already been translated into English, coming a long way from their classical sources. These classical texts had entered Europe in a variety of ways. There were two main schools of translation that dealt with the classical and Arabic sources. Both, the school of Salerno and the school of Toledo put into circulation many translations from the scientific lore. Among the translators known for their contribution, we may well mention Gerard of Cremona, who translated many Arabic sources into Latin making them available for audiences in the European Continent. Together with Constantinus Africanus, he belonged to the most prolific group of translators of the Early Middle Ages in Europe. The dissemination of knowledge was a complex process. Recently some light has been shed on the potential role of Richard de Fournival in the assembly and dissemination of the materials of his remarkable library in connection to the fluctuation of medical knowledge in Northern France and Britain. Green (2018) argues that he may have had an important role in the appearance of medical corpora (the so-called “New Galen”) during the last part of the thirteenth century.

Medical medieval texts are frequently found within miscellaneous volumes. This was the way in which they circulated among libraries, forming self-contained units that served a wider purpose. There has been an interest in recent years in studying miscellanies and the dynamics that lie beneath them. It certainly makes sense to say that miscellanies in medieval times were the vessels in which knowledge was transmitted, especially when it comes to scientific material. This was the case of the herbal *Agnus Castus*, but also to other canonical works circulating in the period. In her recent edition of the *Circa Instans*, Garrido-Anes refers to the importance of herbals and their survival into the Modern era:

The Salernitan *Liber de Simplici Medicina* exerted great influence upon thirteen-century encyclopaedists and botanists, and became the cover material for later herbals until the sixteenth century. It seems that it was soon after the introduction of chemical remedies by the physician Paracelsus and his followers – and the subsequent scientific revolution – that the CI ceased to be copied and printed, and therefore fell into oblivion (Garrido-Anes 2020: xv).

The relevance and popularity of works like the *Circa Instans* or the *Agnus Castus* extended on more than four centuries, a time during which a substantial number of manuscripts were in wide circulation. This is precisely what makes them so ideal to examine their textual fluctuation and their social and cultural dimensions, including readership.

In the Early Modern times, with an advent of printing, a new technology appears bringing new possibilities. We find print copies in different layouts -the so-called cheap editions- as well as more expensive and elaborate ones, normally found in libraries of noble families. However, the majority of these early modern copies would retain their practical function, and the printers had to keep this in mind when producing the new versions. In this article, the selected text for this period is no less than the first Herbal printed in England: *Banckes' Herbal*, printed by Richard Banckes himself. In her famous work about the history of herbals, Agnes Arber (1986) devotes a chapter to the earliest printed herbals, and she refers to two printed books, the earliest of which contained material related only from the field of botany: *Liber de proprietatibus rerum* by Bartholomeus Anglicus (Arber 1986: 13), printed in 1470. Its success was materialized in the 25 editions that came out in the fifteenth century. However, the first Herbal was Banckes'. It became also extremely popular and this popularity is reflected in the large number of editions produced by different printers: “although their identity has been obscured by the various names under which they were published.” (*ibidem*: 43). Our main interest in this herbal lies in the fact that it is an Early Modern Version of the *Agnus Castus*. A brief description and history of both versions will be the subject of the section that follows.

### THE CASE OF THE HERBAL *AGNUS CASTUS*: REVIEW AND MAIN SOURCES

The research hereby presented is drawn from a wider project which aims at producing a thorough study of the *Agnus Castus* Herbal in order to understand the changes in language and society of the periods through which this text fluctuates. The ultimate goal is to have a more global and multifaceted perspective of the textual and cultural phenomenon, the interaction of a text and its audience in the different moments of its existence. In this particular article, the focus is set on the visual and discourse changes identified from manuscript to the earliest printed source.

The *Agnus Castus* Herbal was a widely known source, as shown by no less than forty-two copies that have reached our days. Herbals were extremely important and very popular, because they constituted the basis for preparing most remedies. Healing – as inherited from the classical tradition – was based on plants and the combination of their properties. Remedies and ailments of all types were to be prepared for healing most common affections. In the miscellaneous volume, herbals were accompanied by treatises of how to grow herbs and plants, or when and in which particular moment of the year, or phase of the moon the herb would be most beneficial.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, there is a proliferation of these texts, which will continue in the Early Modern period. The *Agnus Castus* in particular, was very well known. It is precisely in the period between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries that secular and professional audiences had many sources made accessible to them by the process of vernacularization, and also because the new and emerging middle-class was better addressed in English. Many medical tracts – and of course herbals – were translated and later printed. Their function was fundamentally practical, in the same fashion in which their alphabetical arrangement was presented. Alphabetical order had been an innovation in medieval times, most probably linked to the pragmatic nature of these texts (Esteve-Ramos 2020: 188):

This macro-level structure facilitates finding the information the reader is looking for, adding some further signalling devices as names of organs or diseases in the margins in order to associate a particular herb with its potential application and properties (Esteve-Ramos 2020: 188).

Also, in his edition of the text, Brodin (1950: 11) points to this arrangement, explaining that even in the complete texts, only letters A through S are included. In the manuscripts where we find the rest of the letters present, it is – Brodin suggests – the case of being later additions. The text follows a very structured pattern. After the name of the plant, which is normally in Latin (although sometimes it is followed by the French or English counterpart) we find the description of its leaves. Also, the comparison with other plants can be present. Details about leaves appear to be important: “These details about the leaves show us that they were probably the most important characteristic for the identification of the plant.” (*ibidem*: 12). It may have been so during the early periods of botanical renaissance. Later, sparked by the curiosity and empiricism brought by Humanism, botany would develop into a more realistic and hands-on discipline. The description that follows may continue with the description of the rest of the plant and its healing qualities. Also, included are instructions for use and the hot or cold quality of the plant. Sometimes we may find references to the place the plant grows, or to uses of the plant other than medical, like cooking or for beauty.

As to the place of *Agnus Castus* in the history of botany, Brodin (1950: 15) states that “*Agnus Castus* came into being in its present state at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup>

century.” In his edition, so far the only one of this text, Brodin establishes solid ground for firmly suggesting that a Latin copy of the *Agnus Castus* (Sloane MS 2948) – possibly related to the school of Salerno – may be the base for the English version of the herbal. Further to this, Brodin (1950: 24) suggests that “It must also be indicated that the Latin *Agnus Castus* was probably written in England and by an Englishman. At the end of the treatise there is a table of contents; wherein we find the Latin plant-names with their English equivalents.”. As to the afterlives of this text, the Early Modern period saw the flourishing of different versions, but *Askan’s Herbal*, printed in 1550, seems to be the last. There is the assumption that this knowledge was not lost afterwards, and that it could be included in the line of descent of different materials, even to our days.

The two sources to be considered in this study are Sloane MS 2460 and Banckes’ Herbal. The Early Modern copy stands out as the First Printed herbal, and as such, it is interesting to look into the first decisions involved in printing in such a challenging medium and environment. The medieval counterpart, as explained above, has forty-two attested copies. Thus, it is difficult (although it would be interesting) to know which was the source (or sources) for the printer. However, as the text presents a similar layout in most medieval copies, we have selected Sloane MS 2460 for its availability in digital format, although unfortunately it has not been possible to examine the manuscript *in vivo*.

Sloane MS 2460 is one of the witnesses of the *Agnus Castus* kept at the Sloane Collection. The description of the British Library on-line catalogue is very brief and does not give much details. The title that appears on the digital catalogue is: “Botanical, De virtutibus herbarum, 13<sup>th</sup> century.” The creation date is given as 13<sup>th</sup> century, although the text is 15<sup>th</sup> century. For further information on dating and a more detailed physical description, see Morrisey (2014). All the text has been copied by the same hand, and the signaling devices such as punctuation and paratextual elements are consistent throughout. The use of the red color is also consistent, achieving the full effect it may have been tended for.

The Early Modern version of the *Agnus Castus* in printed form chosen for this work is that by Richard Banckes from 1525. This is the first printed herbal in England, a small quarto printed by Banckes himself, as can be read in the colophon:

Colophon.-Jf Imprynted by me Rycharde Banckes/dwellynge in Lado /a lytel froye’ Stockesinye Pultry/yexxv.day of Marche. The yere of our Lorde. M.CCCC.&XXV.

In the following year, 1526, Banckes issued another edition, the first of many as the text became very popular and was repeatedly printed until 1550, as Barlow (1913: 108) noted:

Banckes’ Herbal on account of its numerous editions, enjoyed a popularity which was not shared by any other English herbal, even to a third of its degree. But this popularity depended, doubtless, on the price at which these editions were sold. Being small in size as well as in

contents, and without illustrations, it would be much cheaper than its rival folio work (Barlow 1913: 108).

It is very clear that printing of this herbal was a success because there must have been a great demand. The practical reasons behind the success of this tract in the medieval times should not, with all probability, be very different from that determining its popularity in Early Modern audience: there would be the decorated and elegant version for the higher standards and social class, and the cheaper, more practical and efficient, for the growing middle classes. Johnson claims that the demand for an unexpensive manual of herbs must have been really high, and this one being the first on the market, might have been a profitable business: “Such was the eagerness of the literate middle classes for cheap books of useful knowledge that they avidly bought whatever the publishers offered them” (Johnson 1944: 260). This was going to gradually change as more scientific works of a more empirical nature would appear on the market, responding to the needs of a more demanding reader, who would begin to leave aside the manuals that bore the burden of the previous unscientific period of medieval lore. More experimental, real science was sought, and this was also seen as an opportunity for accessing status in a changing society:

The revival of botany after the torpor of the Middle Ages came in the period of great social and philosophical movement when the rising merchant class of the towns sought to break the power of the feudal aristocracy and the Church, and almost as a by-product of their efforts, established capitalism as the dominant, and ultimately the exclusive, social systems in the economically most advanced countries of Europe (Morton 1981: 115).

All these circumstances may have had a reflection on how printers decided to produce their new material. Smith (2020: 228) quotes that “In a valuable study, Diane Scott has aptly argued that “the gradually changing “model” of reader during the late medieval and early modern periods exerted gradual pressure on the systems of paratext and punctuation applied by editors to the chosen texts” (2015: 52)”. In the next section, we will try to show whether this is the case in our selected material.

## DISCOURSE AND RHETORICAL FEATURES IN THE *AGNUS CASTUS*: DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The focus is now on textual features which form the basis for the study. The analysis refers to the transcriptions and conventions as presented in the Appendix. This brief analysis has been based on the first entry of the tract, for the plant *Agnus Castus*, in both, the medieval and early modern counterpart.

In Sloane MS 2460, we identify very clear patterns. This manuscript presents conventions in punctuation and discursive elements that are consistent throughout.

The use of color red for underlining and marking or touching the engrossed letters and the initial letter of each entry is used throughout this copy, as in letter A for Agnus in line 1 as can be seen in the following extract of folio 2r:

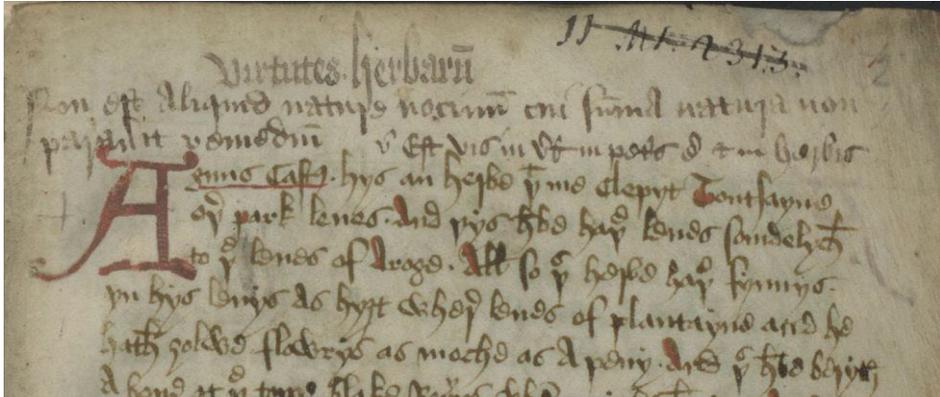


Figure 1. © British Library Board Sloane MS 2460, f. 2r  
(reproduced with the permission of the British Library)

The main devices deployed to give some cohesion and coherence to the text are the *virgule* and also *punctus*, which is used very occasionally. Other common resources that add to the visual structure of the text are engrossed letters and underlining with the red color, the use of the adverb “also” and the coordinating conjunction “and” in order to structure the text. This is found in almost every line, and helps to establish the coherence of the text (cf. 2, 3, 5, 8, 12, 15, 21, 22, 26, 27 and 30, see Appendix). In the cases occurring in lines 5, 12, 15, 17, 23 and 27, “also” and “and” are also preceded by the *virgule*. The use of “and” and “also” is normally followed by the noun phrase “þys herbe” or “þe herbe”, which helps to structure of the entry by introducing information about the plant and its properties, and can be read in the following transcription:

(line 2) or parkleves. And þys herbe haþ lewes somelyke  
(line 21) Also þe herbe destroyeth þe fowle luste of lecherye

This helps to establish a microstructure within the text that is easier to follow and finding the requested information. There are two glosses as well, which also add to the set of visual references set in the manuscript. Keiser (1999: 475) explains this aspect of the layout of medieval manuscripts:

Of particular importance is the apparatus accompanying these texts, which indicates that the compilers and early owners of these miscellanies were persons who recognized, to a greater or lesser degree, that finding-devices would permit efficient access to material within the treatises

(...). Especially in a study of the practical book, we can better understand how readers were using these miscellanies by examining the *ordinatio*, that is, the division of a text into parts and the ordering of those parts, as well as the apparatus that facilitated use of *ordination* (Keiser 1999: 475).

Apart from this internal structure, the full glossary, following the alphabetical arrangement, provides the macrostructure, making this herbal very successful in delivering good guidance for the user, as it has been referred to above. The presence of “and” and “also” seems to provide the same function, having as a result a very scarce presence of *punctus*. Smith (2020: 119) also refers to this case:

Parkes offered several reasons for why scribes could omit punctuation, but the most plausible suggestion is that Love regularly deployed “easily recognizable lexical syntax markers: conjunctions and adverbs” (1997c: 55), and this characteristic is exemplified in the transcription offered, where forms such as *and* and *but* are commonplace (Smith 2020: 119).

Different parts of the manuscript are underlined, offering further visual help to the reader.

In line 9, as can be seen in the transcription below, we find underlining in the noun phrase “The virtue”, pointing at the main property of this herb, which is that keeps men and women chaste:

(line 9) drye groundys. The virtue of þes herbe ys þat he will kepe  
 (line 10) man and wymmyn chaste. for a Syacolydon and Placius

The word “Author”, and the name of two authorities, “Syacolydon” and “Placius” are also highlighted for the user/reader with the initials in red and the underlining, cf.:

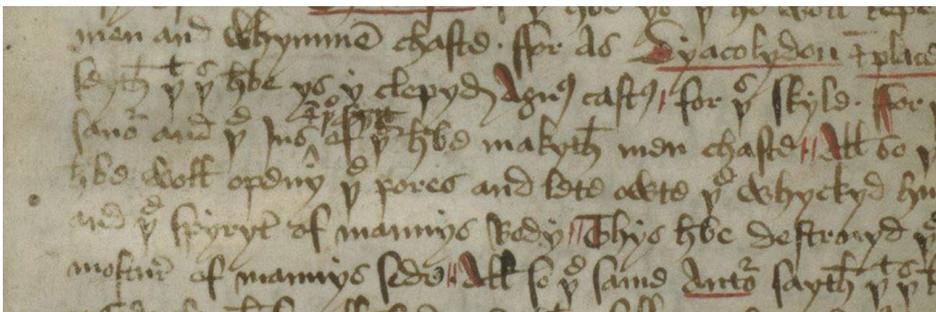
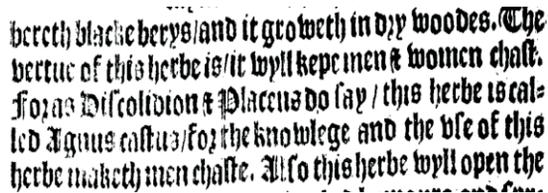


Figure 2. © British Library Board MS Sloane 2460, f. 2r  
 (reproduced with the permission of the British Library)

In the Early Modern text, many similarities with the previous text can be found. However, some differences are worth a comment. The use of the *virgule* is much more frequent -as it is the use of the *punctus*- which gives the text a much better organization of the clauses and the *sententiae*, as seen in lines 20 and 21 (see the transcription policy in the Appendix):

(line 20) Also this herbe destroyeth the fowle lust of lechery / and  
 (line 21) it be dronken / or yf it be borne aboute hym. Therefore

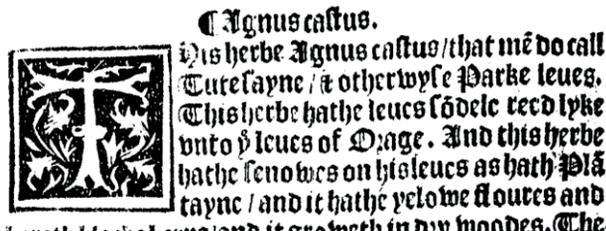
In line 9, the authorities still bear engrossed letters, which are also found denoting names of plants:



bereth blacke berys / and it groweth in dry woodes. The  
 vertue of this herbe is / it wyll kepe men & women chaste.  
 For as Discolition & Placens do say / this herbe is cal-  
 led Agnus castus / for the knowlege and the vse of this  
 herbe maketh men chaste. Also this herbe wyll open the

Figure 3. Banckes' Herbal, page 1 (source: EBBO)

Capitalization can be found in “also”, as in lines 11, 14, 16, 20 and 25, followed by a noun phrase introducing the properties of the plants. However, “and” does not follow this pattern, which was present in the medieval manuscript, and it is instead here presented after a *virgule*, which could perform a similar function as the touching of red in the medieval counterpart. The first letter of the text is not only engrossed as in Sloane MS 2460, but it is illuminated in the new printing fashion with herbal decorations.



**C** Agnus castus.  
 This herbe Agnus castus / that me do call  
 Curetayne / & otherwyse Parke leues.  
 This herbe hathe leues so dele recd lyke  
 vnto þ leues of Orange. And this herbe  
 hathe fenowes on his leues as hath Pla-  
 tayne / and it hathe yelowe floures and  
 groweth in dry woodes. The

Figure 4. Banckes' Herbal, page 1 (source: EBBO)

In the following decades, double *punctus* and a complication of punctuation and cohesive devices will be more frequent and present among the resources of the English printers, who will use them to accommodate the old ways into the new sociocultural environment, joining the verbal with the visual. Smith (2020: 99)

explains this: “In more extensive reading cultures, where readers regularly encounter new and varied forms of text, more guidance is needed, and, as a result, more comprehensive programs of punctuation are required.”

The main aspects of interest in this comparison relate to the substitution of the underlining and the red color in the manuscript for the increase of the use of the virgule prompted by the technical characteristics of this new medium. Glosses have disappeared and the presence of the illuminated letter with herbal decorations, together with an increase of engrossed letters, supply a neatly arranged counterpart of the medieval *Agnus castus* entry.

The different resources present in both, the medieval and the early modern counterpart, are part of the communication between those who copied and edited the text and their audiences. In the same fashion a conversation presents what has been labelled today as multimodal features, a text in the earlier periods shows these signs: it marks emphasis, pause, or connection. They form part of the pragmatics of the text, comprising a set of tools that allow us to better understand the ultimate function of the text and to understand the contemporary audience, who was the ultimate recipient of the message of the copist/editor. This idea is also referred to in Varila *et al.* (2017: 9):

A key term appearing above is “multimodality”. Multimodal analysis “approaches representation, communication and interaction as something more than language”; writing is thus only one of the communicational and semiotic meaning-making tools explored alongside image, gesture, speech and other modes. The multimodal approach could thus lend itself to a discussion of both layout and typography/script. Although multimodal studies typically focus on present-day material, they offer a useful perspective for studying early written communication as well (Varila *et al.* 2017: 9).

This is clearly one of the most interesting paths for further research. Following Varila *et al.* (2017: 5), all the different approaches in fashion are overviewed, with the ultimate objective of describing what they call the visual and material features of a text. In resorting back to the concept of ordination and compilation introduced by Parkes (1976) in his iconic work, Varila *et al.* (2017: 5) explain how the changes in reading practices introduced changes that were visible in the manuscript page and addressed to the new readership:

These requirements for scholarly apparatus led to a stabilization of the presentation of various elements on the page, such as supplying the main text in a larger and more formal script and the commentary in a smaller script, giving the source references in the margin, and using red ink to highlight the name of auctores (Varila *et al.* 2017: 5).

This seems to be the case with Sloane MS 2460. There are also other aspects that could be analyzed but are not the scope of this work, as for example the muting of dialectal variation in the early modern copy. According to Smith (2020: 115), this

aspect could also be connected to changes that have to do with text reception in this particular process that takes place from manuscript to print. Finally, I would also like to suggest that another line to pursue is the comparison of the Early Modern Printed versions that successfully came to see the light after the first one in 1525. As decades go by, perhaps an increase of sophistication in the use of punctuation devices should be expected, as some other changes in relation to the syntax and coherence of the text. All in all, texts are conduits of cultural and social change and we must also think about them as channels through which we can establish a dialogue with the readers in the past.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article shows how the study of discursive and rhetorical features present in medieval witnesses can be a relevant source of study for understanding the change of practices, both from the perspective of the printer and the reader. In the case of the *Agnus Castus* herbal, the patterns observed reveal features that may be very similar, the reason being perhaps that these two copies are not too many years apart. However, some interesting insights are gained, and this paves the way for further lines of research.

It is difficult to know why the use of punctuation in most medieval manuscripts is scarce in comparison to other similar materials, but the fact that the *Agnus Castus* Herbal was alphabetically arranged may have already given a sense of structure.

What can be inferred is that the person behind the production of both the manuscript and the printed copy had the material arranged for practical use, using signaling devices for the reader to be able to follow more easily. However, in the case of the printed versions, a new medium was at the printer's disposal, and the question of whether this may have influenced the outcome is, in my judgment, a relevant and interesting one. One of the constraints of this study is perhaps that the two copies are very close in their timeline, and that a wider chronological gap may evidence further changes which became the norm in later printed copies. All in all, however, the tendency to observe textual evolution in a more fluid context, considering cultural and social aspects in order to understand the nature of textual function is not only posing fundamentally interesting questions, but as Smith (2020) proposes, assists our humble efforts in "reimagining" philology in the twenty-first century.

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## APPENDIX

### Transcription policies.

In order to be able to discuss the observed features, the following conventions are therefore used:

Sloane MS 2460

// for virgule

Underlined: touching of red

**Bold**: engrossed letters with a touching of red

1 Agnus castus hys an herbe that men clepyth Toutsayne  
 2 or parkleves. And þys herbe haþ lewes somelyke  
 3 to þe lewes of Arago. Also þe herbe hath synnewes  
 4 in hys lewes as hyt weron lewes of plantayne and it  
 5 hath golde flourys as moche as a peny// And þys herbe beryth  
 6 aboue at þe croppe blacke berys when þai beth rype and  
 7 3yf þe beryes be not rype þay beth 3ellowe as þe flower  
 8 of the herbe. And þe herbe growyth moche yn wodys and in  
 9 drye groundys. The virtue of þes herbe ys þat he will kepe  
 10 man and wymmen chaste. for a Syacolydon and Placius  
 11 sayth þat þe herbe ys clepyd Agnus castus for this skyl for þe  
 12 savour and þe use of þe herbe makyth men chaste //Also þis  
 13 herbe also oppyng þe pores and lete odors þe destryctyth humors  
 14 and the spyryts of manninges body //Thys herbe destroyeth þe  
 15 moisture of mannys sede. //Also the same Author sayth þat þis herbe  
 16 be sode with fynnell seed and eysell ys gode to destroye  
 17 the colde dropsye //Also yf þys herbe be sode with smalache  
 18 and sache in salte water and afterward þe hynderpart  
 19 of a mannys hed be strongly washeth þat with it  
 20 helpyth and ynbyndyht an evill þat men clepyth litargia//  
 21 Also þe herbe destroyeth þe fowle luste of lecherye  
 22 not onlych 3yf hyt be ydronke with and a man use  
 23 to lygge upon hym and slepe upon hym//And for sometime  
 24 men usyd to ete þe herbe þat rostyed by cahuse to chasty ham. for  
 25 3yf the herbe be ete rawe hewell lyghtly gendred þe hedache  
 26 Also þe herbe is good destroy hardenyng and stopping of

27 lyver and þe mylte./Also a playster ymade of þe herbe ys  
 28 goode to do away þe hedache of mannys hed þay ys gode  
 29 ryd of wyckyd humors./This herbe is hote and drye  
 30 And þer beþ thre spyces of her **&**

Banckes' Herball

/ for virgule

**Bold** for engrossed capital letters.

1 This herbe **Agnus castus** / that men do call  
 2 Tutesayne / & otherwyse **Parke** leues.  
 3 This herbe hathe leues somdele reed lyke  
 4 vnto the leues of **O**rage. And this herbe  
 5 hathe senowes on his leues as hath **P**lan  
 6 tayne / and it hathe yelowe floures and  
 7 bereth blacke berys / and it groweth in dry woodes. **T**he  
 8 vertue of this herbe is / it wyll kepe men & women chast.  
 9 For as **D**iscolidion & **P**lacens do say / this herbe is cal  
 10 led **Agnus castus** / for the knowlege and the vse of this  
 11 herbe maketh men chaste. **A**lso this herbe wyll open the  
 12 poores of a man and let out wycked humours and spy  
 13 rytes of his body. **T**his herbe destroyeth the moysture  
 14 of mannes sede. **A**lso the same **A**uctour saythe that yf  
 15 this be sothen with Fenell sede in **A**ysell / it is good to  
 16 destroye the **D**ropsy. **A**lso yf this herbe be sothen with  
 17 **S**malage and **S**age in salte water / and afterwarde  
 18 the hynder parte of mannes heed be well wasshed therwith  
 19 it heleth it & vnbyndeth an euyll that is called **B**itarge.  
 20 **A**lso this herbe destroyeth the fowle lust of lechery / and  
 21 it be dronken / or yf it be borne aboute hym. **T**herefore  
 22 somtyme they do ete it rosted / bycause it shall kepe them +  
 23 chaste. For yf this herbe be eten rawe / it wyll engendre  
 24 heed ache. **T**his herbe is good to defye the hardnes and  
 25 stoppynge of the mylte. **A**lso a playster of this herbe / is  
 26 good to do away the ache of a mannes heed that is en  
 27 gendred of wycked humours. **T**his herbe is dry.