

Structure-Signalling Devices in Middle English Manuscripts on the Diseases of Women

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the structure-signalling devices in some Middle English manuscripts apparently written for the instruction of the midwife and the physician to assist women in their sickness. My intention is to see whether the scribes intended to mark the structure of their text, probably to guide their readers, and by what means this is achieved. This analysis performed here combines a traditional methodology, i.e. paleaography, with modern pragmatic and discourse-analysis methods.

Key words: manuscripts, Middle English, palacography, discourse analysis, punctuation, structure, ordinatio, visual devices, decoration, literacy, diseases of women, Gilbertus Anglicus, marginalia

RESUMEN

Este artículo explora los mecanismos que señalan la estructura en algunos manuscritos médicos ingleses que, al parecer, fueron escritos para la matrona y el médico para asistir a las mujeres. Mi interés se centra en comprobar si los escribas tenían la intención de mostrar la estructura de su texto, quizás para guiar a los lectores, y si es así, qué medios usan. La metodología de estudio combina la tradición paleográfica, con métodos pragmáticos y de análisis del discurso.

Palabras clave: manuscritos, inglés medio, paleografía, análisis del discurso, puntuación, estructura, ordinatio, elementos visuales, decoración, educación, enfermedades de la mujer, Gilbertus Anglicus, marginalia

INTRODUCTION

The present paper explores the devices used in a set of medieval manuscripts on the diseases of women that are versions of the Gilbertus Anglicus' gynaecological and obstetrical chapters of the *Compendium medicinae* to signal their structure. These devices fall into two main categories: non-linguistic and linguistic. The non-linguistic cues to text structure include aspects such as

decorative initials and drawings, whereas the linguistic cues comprise marginal apparatuses, and the use of punctuation, among others. The two groups serve the purposes of specifying the structure, and of indicating to readers the part of the treatise they are reading or about to read. These mechanisms are essential in medical treatises due to their practical nature.

The texts on the diseases of women were presumably written for a female audience. As a matter of fact, some other variants of these manuscripts claim in their prologues that the texts were aimed at a female reading public so that immoral male doctors could not take advantage of their privileged situation, as I shall illustrate in section 2. The lack of literate women does not justify the biased conception that all women could not read and that they were not interested in scientific and practical matters during the medieval period as this was generally considered a male territory. Although it is true that the majority of women were not taught how to read, a literate woman read the texts aloud to them so that they could become documented and fully instructed in the craft of childbirth. This does not rule out the idea that these texts were also read by men, as they often were. In fact these texts on the diseases of women were very likely more widely distributed among male doctors: *It is not clear that the readership was necessarily a primarily female one. We can only imagine that, because of its apparently wider circulation and the intimacy with which it appears to speak to a female audience, the text speaks to and helps define a potentially female literacy, and a context for that literacy, however limited* (Hellwarth 2002: 50). In this study, the use of these texts with contents presumably written for women does not mean or intend to show that structure-signalling devices are gender-oriented.

2. DATA

The data for the present analysis have been read and collected from the original manuscripts that I quote below on page 329, along with eVK numbers and bibliographical information.

The incipits as in eVK for the items in (1) and the other medical items in the books where they are embedded are listed in (3) below. All of the item studied in this paper are written in fifteenth-century hands, although some sixteenth century additions are also found. Green (1992) has identified these extracts as Version 1 of Gilbert of England's *Compendium medicinae*. This version 1 is characterised by the absence of some parts of the *Compendium* which are, however, present in Version 2. The texts are often introduced by a prologue that justifies the need for this text for women from a moral perspective: *And though women have diuers evelles & many greet greuaunces mo than men knowen of, as I seyde, hem schamen for drede of repreving in tymes coming & of discuryng off vncur-*

[1]

| VOLUME | BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION | EVK NUMBERS |
|--|--|-------------|
| 1 Glasgow, Glasgow University Library, MS Hunter 307 (U.7.1), ff. 149v-165v (henceforth H) | Green 1992 Vega-Déniz ed. 2002 Alonso-Almeida 2003 | 1162.00 |
| 2 New Haven, Yale Medical Library, MS 47, ff. 60v-71v (henceforth Y) | Green 1992 Alonso-Almeida 2003 Hallaert ed. 1982 Alonso-Almeida ed. 1997 Alonso-Almeida & Rodríguez-Álvarez 1996 | 8199.00 |
| 3 London, British Library, Sloane 5 (henceforth S5) | Green 1992 Alonso-Almeida 2003 | 4554.00 |
| 4 London, British Library, Sloane 3486 (henceforth S3486) | Alonso-Almeida 2003 Dominguez-Rodríguez 2004 Dominguez-Rodríguez ed. 2003 | 906.00 |

teys men that loue women but for her lustes and for her foule lykyng (London, British Library, Sloane 2463, f. 194r; Rowland 1981: 58)¹. The texts analysed here begin very differently, as shown in (2) below:

[2]

Also we schulen vnderstonde that wymmen han lesse hete in her body than men & more moistnesse for defaute of hete that schulde drye her humours and her moistnesse/ But netheles kynde hath ordeyned wymmen a purgacioun at certeyn tymes of bledyng to make her bodyes cleene and hool fre siknesse (H, f. 149r).

Her begynnes the sekenesse of wymmen wech ys clepyd the moder id est matrix ye schal vnderstonde that wymmen hafe las heete yn them then men . And mor moistnesse but neuer the lese kynde hathe ordeyned wymmen a purgacyon of bledyng at certayn tymes . to make hyr bodyes clene and hool of sekenesse . the which purgacion of bledyng they hafe from tyme that they ar xij yeer of age in to the tyme of fyfty yeer (Y, f. 60r).

¹ Thorns are normalised as *th* in all the examples; abbreviations have been also silently expanded.

Sires we schull vnderstonde that women hau less hete then men in her body and more moistnes ¶ But nether lesse kynde hathe ordeyned a purgacyoun at certeyn tymes of bledynge to make her bodyes clene and hole from all sekenes and thei hau suche purgaciouns fro the tyme of xij 3ere wynter age in to the age of fifty wynter (S5, f. 159r).

Also we shal vnderstonde that wymen hau lesse hete in her body than men & more moistnesse for defaute of hete that schuld drie her humours and her moistnesse But netheless kynde hathe ordeynd wymen a purgacioun at certayn tymes of bledynge to make her bodies clene and hole froo sekenesse . And thei hau sich purgaciouns fro the tym of xij wynter of age in to the age of fyfty wynter (S3486, f. 140v).

These examples reflect that the variants were written almost *literatim*. The texts in H and in S3486 are a case in point, as they are exact copies with the exception of spelling, which varies according to dialect usage. In italics in the texts of Y and S5, I have highlighted the differences between these two and H and S3486. S3486 starts off in a very traditional way, whereas S5 uses the word *sires* to show that men are unquestionably one category of readers of this treatise. This stands in sharp contrast to what is said in the above mentioned Sloane 2463, which clearly claims that the book is intended as a manual for women: *And therefore, in helping of women I wyl wright of women prevy sekenes the helping, and that oon woman may helpe another in her sykenesse & noght diskuren her previtees to suche vncurteys men* (f. 194r).

[3]

Glasgow, Glasgow University Library MS Hunter 307

| Item | Incipit | Length (ff.) | eVK no. |
|------|--|--------------|---------|
| 1 | It is to understand that a man is made of four elements and every man hath four | 1-13 | 3206.00 |
| 2 | A man that will help men in their sickness him behooveth to know the encheasons | 13-148v | 640.00 |
| 3 | As we shall understand that women have less heat in their body than men and more moistness | 149v-165v | 1162.00 |
| 4 | A physician behooveth to know three manner inspections in bloodletting that is to say | 165v-166 | 659.00 |
| 5 | Aloe is hot and dry in the second degree and it | 167-172v | 860.00 |

New Haven, Yale Medical Library MS 47

| Item | Incipit | Length (ff.) | eVK no. |
|------|--|--------------|---------|
| 1 | Jesus that was in Bethlechem born/ And baptized was in flum Jordan | 1-57 | 3272.00 |
| 2 | In the month of January white wine is good to drink fasting and forbear and bloodletting seven days | 57-58v | 2999.00 |
| 3 | Take feverfew and tansy red fennel sage and five leaves of wormwood and stamp them in a mortar | 59-59v | 5334.00 |
| 4 | Ye shall understand that women have less heat in them than men and more moistness | 60-60v | 8244.00 |
| 5 | Withholding of her blood that she may not have her purgation in due time is caused | 60v-71 | 8199.00 |
| 6 | Take calamint sage southernwood puliol royal puliol montane pellitory rosemary camomille | 72-72v | 5200.00 |
| 7 | Agnus Castus is an herb that men call tutsan or parkleaves and this herb hath | 73-99 | 772.00 |
| 8 | Herba cruciata is crosswort this herb hath little leaves and a small stalk with white flowers | 84-85 | 2139.00 |
| 9 | Take hyssop and stamp it small and then put therto a little wort and temper them together | 102v | 5545.00 |
| 10 | In the year be four quarters ruleth by the four complexions | 103-103v | 3049.00 |
| 11 | If thou would keep thee long health then hold this rule flee anger wrath and envy give thee to mirth | 103v-104 | 2743.00 |
| 12 | There be fifty canicular days that is for to wit from the fifteenth kalends of August | 104-104v | 7135.00 |
| 13 | Right as there be four elements so there be four complexions according in all | 104v-105 | 4355.00 |
| 13 | Alexander the great conqueror in all his conquest and wars was ruled by Aristotle | 105-109 | 802.00 |
| 14 | In each changing of each moon been two days in which whatever thing he begun | 109-110 | 2777.00 |
| 15 | Evermore thus reigns the planets in their course first Saturn then Jupiter then Mars | 110-110v | 1544.00 |
| 16 | Saturns hour is good and strong to all thing that asks strength only and to nought else | 110v-112 | 4490.00 |
| 17 | After that this Alexander the great king conqueror of all the world has gone to Macedonia | 112-113 | 760.00 |
| 18 | Thou shalt understand that every quarter of the moon containeth in Luna seven dies | 113-113v | 7532.00 |
| 19 | Take of canel four ounces ginger one ounce and half grains de paris galingale nutmeg | 114v-116 | 5671.00 |
| 20 | Take a pottle of fine wort and a pint of good honey and put in a pan and let them boil | 116-118v | 4800.00 |

London, British Library, Sloane MS 5

| Item | Incipit | Length (ff.) | eVK no. |
|------|--|--------------|---------|
| 1 | Ache is hot and dry the juice of ache and crumbs of bread made of wheat made in a plaster | 13-57 | 729.00 |
| 2 | Age is mother of forgettilhed and forasmuch as the science of prognostication | 61-62 | 765.00 |
| 3 | Then we may not prognostic in maladies til we know verily the malady and therefore | 62-63 | 7115.00 |
| 4 | Scotomy is such a sickness of the brain that it maketh a man to seem that he seeith flies | 63v-151v | 424.00 |
| 5 | Conception id est the conceiving now by vice of the man and now by vice of the woman | 152-153 | 1436.00 |
| 6 | Lepra is a corruption of the members coming of putrefaction or rotting of | 153-155 | 3339.00 |
| 7 | Raucedo id est hoarsehood or the impediment or hindering of the voice is caused | 155-155v | 4072.00 |
| 8 | Take an egg and roast it hard then cut it twain long way and incontinent lay on | 156 | 4943.00 |
| 9 | And in the patient eke measure electuary to the restoring of the moisthood | 157 | 260.00 |
| 10 | Master Bernard wrote in a book that is called among Romans Alma Gestorum that if | 157-157v | 3527.00 |
| 11 | Sirs we shall understand that women have less heat than men in their body and more moistness | 158-172v | 4554.00 |
| 12 | Here beginneth the marvelous and soothfast cunning of astrology found and proved | 173 | 2247.00 |
| 13 | Wit ye well indoubtable that when the moon is in Aries for that beginneth at | 173-179 | 8184.00 |
| 14 | Now then man desirest to have the complexion and the virtue of the moon wit thou well | 179 | 3785.00 |
| 15 | Here beginneth the moon Ptolomy found by old doctors of astrology more than three thousand | 179-179v | 2251.00 |
| 16 | Now ye must understand that there been seven planets the first and the most next us of all | 179v-181 | 3817.00 |
| 17 | Evermore after other reigneth the seven planets first Saturn then Jupiter Mars Sol Venus | 181-182v | 1539.00 |
| 18 | In urine been eighteen contents that is to say the circle ample reni clouds | 182v-187 | 3086.00 |
| 19 | If a woman milk her right breast in water and if it fall down to the bottom then it is | 187 | 2575.00 |
| 20 | Karapos signifieth the dropsy a wind under the side the stone and the headache aposteme in the lungs | 187v-190 | 3287.00 |
| 21 | For to know evils that come of apostemes how it am cleped and of what complexion it am | 191-193 | 1911.00 |

London, British Library, Sloane MS 3486

| Item | Incipit | Length (ff.) | eVK no |
|------|---|--------------------|---------|
| 1 | There been three general rules given in this matter how that a man shall make | 3-16v | 515.00 |
| 2 | Take one ounce of sugar candy tutty prepare three drams powder them | 17-18 | 463.00 |
| 3 | Take common mallows and see the then till they be soft | 18-18v | 5244.00 |
| 4 | Here beginneth a treatise of Ipocras Galen Lucien Henricus de Amondavilla | 18v | 2198.00 |
| 5 | There shall be two things the which owe to be understand of curation of wounds | 19-57v | 7233.00 |
| 6 | Galen that was the lantern of physicians and of surgeons saith in the seventeenth book De utilitate | 58-80v | 2004.00 |
| 7 | It is to understand that a man is made of four elements and every man hath four | 86-140v and 25-25v | 3206.00 |
| 8 | Also we shall understand that women have less heat in their body and more moistness | 140-147v | 906.00 |
| 9 | A physician behooveth to know three manner of inspections in bloodletting that is to say | 147v | 659.00 |
| 10 | For garsing and ventosing it befalleth oftymes small veins to be touched that run | 147v-148 | 1841.00 |

The contents of the treatise (Version 1) are divided into fifteen chapters, including the prologue. I have found that this division is kept in all the copies surveyed here. The table in (4) illustrates the relationship in terms of contents among the four manuscripts and the *Compendium medicinae* by Gilbert of England, here identified as A. The internal structure of the chapters is also maintained in all the texts. This structure is shown in terms of stages that are labelled according to the contents they represent, following the directions in Hasan (1985) and Eggins (1997). These two authors use the concepts of structure generic potential and actual generic structure. The former offers all the possible stages that may be used in the production of a specific genre, whereas the latter presents the stages outlined for a specific example. The stages can be compulsory or optional for a given structure potential.

[4]

| H | Y | S5 | S3486 | A |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| Preface: <i>Also we schulen vnderstonde</i> | Preface: <i>Ye schal vnderstonde that</i> | Preface: <i>Sires we shull vnderstonde that</i> | Preface: <i>Also we shal understond that</i> | <i>De retentione menstruorum</i> |
| With holding of this blod | Wyth haldynge of here blode | With holdyng of this blode | Withholdynge of this blode | <i>De retentione menstruorum</i> |
| Dropesie of the modir | Dropcy of the modere | Dropsie of the modir | Dropesie of the modir | <i>De ydropisi matricis</i> |
| Sleyng of the modir | Fleyng of the modere | Felyng of the modir | Sleyng of the modir | <i>De excoriatione matricis</i> |
| To moche flowing of blood | To myche floyng of blode | To myche flowyng of blode | To myche flowyng | <i>De fluxu nimio menstruorum</i> |
| Suffocacioun of the modir | Suffocacio matricis | Soffocacion of the modir | Suffocacion of the modir | <i>De suffocatione matricis</i> |
| Precipitacioun of the modir | Precipitacioun of the modir | Precipitacioun of the modir | Precipitation of the modir | <i>De precipitatione matricis + De exitu matricis</i> |
| Muche wynd ther is also in the modir | Wynde yn the modir | Miche wynde | Myche wynde ther is also in the modir | <i>De ventositate matricis</i> |
| A postum of the modir | For aposteme yn the modir | A posteme of the modir | A postume of the modir | <i>De apostemate matricis</i> |
| Woundis of the modir | Woundys yn the modir | Woundis in the modir | Also woundes of the modir | <i>De vulneribus matricis</i> |
| Cancryng of the modir | Cancur of the modir | Cancryng of the modir | Cancryng of the modir | <i>De cancro matricis</i> |
| Ache of the modir | Ache of the modir | Ache of the modir | Ache of the modir | <i>De dolore matricis post partum</i> |
| Greuaunce that woman hau in bei3ring child | Greuaunce of the modir | Greuaunce that women haue in beryng of childrene | Greuaunce that women hau in beryng childe | <i>De difficultate pariendi</i> |
| The secoundyne | Secundina matrice | Secundyne | The secondyne | <i>De secundina intus remanente post partum</i> |
| Also women bleden otherwhil to moche aftir that thei hau bore child | Bledynge of wymmen after the birthe | Blodynge of the modir | Also women blede other while to myche after that thei hau bore chylde | <i>De fluxu sanguinis + De cancro matricis</i> |

The generic structure potential differs both for the prefaces and the rest of the chapters. These structure potentials are given in (5), below:

[5]

PREFACE – GENERIC STRUCTURE POTENTIAL (as in Alonso-Almeida 2003)

$$(TI) \wedge TD \wedge AEI \wedge TOC$$

Key: TI: topic introduction; TD: description of topic;
AEI: additional explanatory information;
TOC: treatise organisation of contents

CHAPTER – GENERIC STRUCTURE POTENTIAL (as in Alonso-Almeida 2003)

$$TT \wedge DD \wedge R \\ R = I \wedge (P) \wedge (A) \wedge (E)$$

Key: TT: title; DD: description of disease; R: recipe;
I: ingredients; P: preparation; A: application;
E: evaluation of treatment

As seen in (5), the generic structure potential for the introductory chapter is divided into four stages. The first stage is TT, which is optional, and it serves the purpose of telling the reader what the text is about. The following section deals with a description of the topic of the complete treatise. This information is given in the traditional *problem-solution* type of text, as defined by Hocy (1994). The AEI stage provides more knowledge that can help the reader towards the identification of the disease. Finally, the last section, i.e. TOC, has a programmatic function as it gives an account of the chapters in which the treatise is organised.

In the case of the chapters, the generic structure potential requires three compulsory stages; the last one is a complex stage that is divided up further into another four stages, some of which are optional. The TT part has two functions; the first relates to the structure of the treatise as it indicates the beginning of a new chapter. The second function serves to show the contents of the chapter. The DD offers information on the causes, the origins and the symptoms of the disease. The R section shows how to produce the therapeutic products recommended to heal a particular disease. This stage is realised in four substages that include the ingredients needed for the preparation (I), the indications on how to perform the mixture of the ingredients (P), the way in which the finished remedy should be administered (A), and, finally, a statement evaluating the efficacy of the preparation (E). Each of the stages is characterised by a lexicogrammatical selection that is constrained both by the genre and the register variables.

This description of the contents and structure of the treatises is very often signalled both by non-linguistic and by linguistic cues. These will be categorised and explained in section 3, below.

3. STRUCTURE-SIGNALLING DEVICES IN H, Y, S5 AND S3486

In this section, I describe the signalling structure devices used in the four manuscripts of the present study. I shall firstly explain those mechanisms that could be labelled as *non-linguistic*. These consist mainly in the use of decoration and typographical devices. Secondly, I concentrate on the linguistic devices used with a primary metatextual function. These are related to punctuation, theme repetition, and the use of certain expressions and lexical items.

3.1. NON-LINGUISTIC DEVICES

The non-linguistic mechanisms to structure the text are different in each of the manuscripts surveyed. Generally speaking, I have found the following signalling strategies: (a) large decorated initials, (b) underlining, and (c) boxes for titles.

The use of large initials is extremely helpful, as they allow readers to skim the text for the chapter needed to cure the disease in question. This technique is specially welcomed in cases such as Y and S5, which do not have a table of contents that could guide readers in this search for information. In S5, indications in a much smaller size show that addition of capital letters extending to six lines was the work of a rubricator, or even the scribe himself, who would have decided to perform this activity later, after the text had been completed (see (7), below). Marginal notations found in the other three texts fulfil a similar function. The nature, the form, the number and the date of these notes are varied, as we shall see in section 3.2.

Another cue to understanding the organisation of the contents is the presence of underlining. This technique is especially effective in text S5, as it clearly indicates the internal structure of the chapters, as in (6):

[6]

Suffocacion of the modurs
... But /if the humours
 is colde... ¶ *And so be that is j*
 seide be fore in the chapitre
 of withholdyng... ¶ *And there fore*
 whan they ben in here accesse...

The last non-linguistic device is the use of boxes that show the beginning of chapters, particularly in S5. These boxes contain the title of the chapter they precede, and they are separated from the previous chapter by several lines. This distance together with the box and the capital initial is a potential-

ly visual device to show the reader the contents of that particular chapter, as in (7), below.

[7]

To myche flowyng of blode

TO myche flowyng of
blode at this membre
comythe in many manerys (S5, f.162th).

3.2. LINGUISTIC DEVICES

The linguistic mechanisms are similar in the majority of the manuscripts. This is expected as the texts are all extant copies of the translated Gilbert of England. These devices consist in the use of (a) punctuation marks, (b) a marginal apparatus, (c) certain expressions and lexical items, and (d) titles. I shall now explain each one of them in turn.

The punctuation systems of all four texts have been studied in Alonso-Almeida 2002, which shows that the majority of symbols serve the function of organising the treatise contents into thematic units. Another task of punctuation is the clarification of particular readings of the texts that can be ambiguous. The punctuation symbols used in these treatises are the *punctus*, the *punctus elevatus*, the *pes positurae*, the *punctus geminus*, the *virgula*, the paragraph mark, and the hyphen. The application of these symbols is given in the following grid:

[8]

| Symbol | punctus | punctus elevatus | pes positurae | punctus geminus | Virgula | paragraph mark | Hyphen |
|--------|---------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------|----------------|--------|
| Y | * | | | | * | | |
| H | * | * | | * | * | * | * |
| S5 | * | | * | | * | * | * |
| S3486 | * | | | | * | * | * |

The interpretation of these symbols is conditioned by our understanding of the structure of the text, since it is very likely that punctuation is given at the beginning and at the end of sections for identification. The *punctus*, for

instance, does not show a high degree of specialisation as it is used (a) to show numerals and measures, (b) to separate sections within the treatise, (c) to link structurally independent linguistic units, (d) to show fronting and/or phrases, and (e) to indicate the relationship between phrases. The examples in (9) illustrate these uses; the letter of each example matches the function above that it illustrates²:

[9]

a. And they hau suche purgacioun fro the tyme off.^{\$} xij.^{\$} wynter age in to the age of fifty wynter (H, ff. 149^v-150^r).

b. A prophetabull bathe for this sekenes · and also for the flux.^{\$} Take a gode quantyte of reyne watre · and the fyethe part of strong vynegre & sethe ther yn the rynde of a blak pluntre And of a not tree · & roses · & plantayne · conferee · daycy · ribwort · mynt oke appulls · pentafileon · hulls · of akkehornes · and of chestaynes.^{\$} sethe al these til the water · be blakes & thikke and make ther of a · bathe & cetera (Y, ff. 65^r-65^v).

c. Thei hau this purgacioun euery monethe ones but if it be wymmen that ben with childe ·^{\$} or wymmen that ben of drie complexioun and trauelen moche (H, f. 150^r).

d.^{\$} and in the tyme of hir purgacioun thei be delyuered of litil matir (H, f. 151^v).

e. The colour of her bries & her yren.^{\$} is cler rede (S3486, f. 141^r).

As seen in these examples, the *punctus* indicates the structure of the text to the reader in various ways. This in turn helps the reader to have a better understanding of the contents and, to locate specific chunks of information. This latter function is also supported by means of other symbols, as I show in (10), below; the symbols are indicated in written form between square brackets.

[10]

a. Let her bathe hir in water that bockis & peritorie ben sode in & frote wel hir wombe with al the erbis and whan sche cometh out of the bath [*punctus elevatus*] make a plaster of peritorie (H, f. 162^r).

b. Either take the other medicynesse that were jtolde in the capitell of fleyng of the moder [*pex positurae*] (S5, f. 170^{va}).

c. whan the modir is yn [*punctus geminus*] tak the poudre of gallis notemugis spikenard & clowes & tempre that poudre with pilol oile (H, f. 160^r).

d. [*virgula*] A gode suppositoryc to purge the humouris [*paraph mark*] Take the... (S5, f. 161^{vb}).

What seems clear from the above examples is the value of punctuation marks as structure-signalling devices, as all the instances quoted reveal the

² The puncti referred to here are indicated by the use of a superscript dollar symbol.

internal organisation of the contents³. This does not undermine their rhetorical function but instead enhances it since the reader can easily identify the parts that should be read as single informative units.

A similar function is fulfilled by the repetition of certain expressions and lexical items that are strategically arranged in the text not only as cohesive devices, but also as a means to indicate the text stage in which the reader is located. This is the reason why they occupy the theme position in the sentence, as illustrated in (11), below, which has examples taken from the chapter *Aposteme off the moder* in S5. These expressions are *another*, *also*, *for to help women of this sickness*, *other medicines are*, especially when given in titles. Other linguistic elements include the imperative forms *tak(e)* and *mak(e)*, and the presence of specific lexical fields such as names associated to body parts, diseases and herbs. Thus, *tak(e)*, and in a lower number of occurrences *mak(e)*, is very often associated with the opening of a recipe after the title, i.e. the ingredients section. The lexical field of body parts characterises the description of sickness section or the application section of a recipe.

[11]

- a. ffor to helpe women of this sikenesse fyrst let her blode at the veyne vndur the ancle (f. 169^{vb}).
- b. One is take whete mele... (f. 170^{rb}).
- c. Either make a plastre of snayllys (f. 170^{rb}).
- d. Either make a plaster of the rotis of affadille (f. 170^{rb}).
- e. Take the meth jwarmed and do ther to the iij part of dispumyd hony (f. 170^{va}).

These examples illustrate the way in which certain linguistic units are organised in order to arrange the contents and help readers in their consultation of the work. A more extreme case is found in the same chapter of S5, which involves thematizing of the conditional clauses throughout the text a number of times that corresponds to the likely number of causes responsible for the disease in question. The same wording with minor changes is repeated each time, as seen in (12); in the majority of the instances a paraph mark precedes the conditional clauses:

³ Another example is found in the Preface to the text of S5. Here the scribe uses the paraph mark to indicate visually the chapters in his programmatic inventory of contents. The scribe of H uses the virgule for the same purpose in his text. Y. S3486 shows a very unsystematic way of marking the connection among the different chunks of information that summarise the treatise contents. This scribe uses the paraph, the virgule, the point, and even capitalisation alone to indicate the transition from one unit to the next. On some occasions an absolute lack of punctuation is found: *mony of the greuaunces that wymmen hau comen of the modur* [no punctuation mark/capitalisation] *one is stoppyng of the blode...* as jseyde [punctus] *Another is suffocacyoun...* of the modur [virgule] *another is when...* (f. 140^v). In any case, the order of the chapters given in the Preface is not necessarily the order followed in the treatise.

[12]

- a. And this posteme comythe sum tymes of hote humouris (f. 169^{va}).
- b. If it is of blode... (f. 169^{va}).
- c. If it ben of colre... (f. 169^{va}).
- d. If it is of blode... (f. 169^{vb}).
- e. If hit be of malencolie... (f. 169^{vb}).

Another structure-signalling device is notes in the margin, as I have already pointed out in 3.1. In Y, they are given in Latin and English in fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century hands. The Latin notes exceed the English ones in number, and they mainly indicate the presence of remedies with words and expressions, such as *a gode stwe* (61^V), *bona medicina* (62^r), *suppositorium* (62^r), *alia medicina* (65^r), *to help wymmen* (68^r), *aliud emplastrum* (69^r), *aliud* (69^r); the word *aliud* functions anaphorically to refer to a type of remedy given earlier in the manuscript text. Other notes indicate information regarding the symptoms of disease [*signa generalia* (60^V), *signa* (61^V)].

In H the marginalia seem to have been written in a sixteen-century hand, and they appear on ff. 153^r and 155^v. These additions represent one particular reader's interest in a particular therapeutic subject. The note on 155^v, for instance, reads *for broken veines* exactly at the point in which a solution is provided for this purpose. The rest of the *marginalia* in the other manuscripts work in a parallel way. S5 offers the title of the running chapter in the top margin of each folio, at least twice for each chapter. Besides standard notes, S3486 gives numeric glosses in interlinear position as well as in the margins⁴.

The last aspect in this group relates to the presence of chapter titles, which have two clear functions. The first is to benefit the reader with some indications as to where a particular piece of information can be located in the text. The second is a metatextual function, since the chapter titles are used with an organising intention. Y exhibits some of these headings in English and some in Latin. The use of Latin in this context has been reported by Pahta as a text-organising strategy in Trevisa's translation of *De proprietatibus rerum* (2004: 43-44).

CONCLUSION

This paper has focused on those devices that signal the content structure of four Middle English manuscripts on the diseases of women. These devices are divided into two main groups labelled *non-linguistic devices* and *linguistic devices*. Non-linguistic cues to text structure include the use of large initials,

⁴ This type of glosses has been studied by Domínguez-Rodríguez (2004).

underlining and boxes. Linguistic ones involve the thematization of certain linguistic strings, the presence of some lexical fields, titles, and a marginal apparatus. The analysis here has shown that the scribes are systematic in the use of their own conventions to structure their texts. It is intriguing to see how different scribes copying different versions of the translated chapters on gynaecology and obstetrics taken Gilbertus Anglicus' *Compendium medicinae* tended to coincide in marking the same parts of the texts. However, the indications are not performed using the same set of conventions in all the texts. Rather they differ from one text to another but all of them have a primary organising, textual function. A secondary function is referential in the sense that they guide readers through the text.

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