PUNCTUATION PRACTICE IN TWO EARLY MODERN ENGLISH VERSIONS OF *THE SECRETS OF ALEXIS* [1]

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Despite being traditionally ignored in most books on historical palaeography, punctuation has received in the last decades a great deal of attention due to the proliferation of studies considering its uses, functions and distribution. Even though it has been extensively addressed in the specific literature, the analysis of punctuation in different formats of identical pieces has been hitherto disregarded, perhaps due to an erroneous assumption that manuscripts employed a lighter and a less consistent repertory than printed books. The present article therefore aims to analyse the use and diffusion of the phenomenon in two Early Modern English versions of Girolamo Ruscelli's *The Secrets of Alexis*, in order to shed some light on the contrasts and similarities between scribal and editorial punctuation procedures, if any. This article is then conceived with a twofold objective: to examine the quantitative distribution of the punctuation symbols attested in the documents

under scrutiny; and to analyse their role at the different textual levels, i.e. macro-textual, sentence, clause and phrase level.

1. Introduction

Punctuation has been traditionally considered as one of the most rudimentary elements that involve the study of both manuscripts and early printed books, particularly on account of its hypothetical arbitrariness (Arakelian 1975, 614-615; Denholm-Young 1954, 77; Zeeman 1956, 18). Until recently, the phenomenon has been a complicated topic in the vernacular given its erratic use among professional scriveners and printers, its disagreement with modern criteria and even its complete absence. This randomness has caused an array of ambiguities and chaotic readings in early English writing which has led scholars to cold-shoulder it, especially if compared with other aspects of historical palaeography (Tannenbaum 1930, 139; Rodríguez-Álvarez 1998, 27).

Even though its forms, functions and distribution have progressively changed in the course of the centuries, punctuation took a remarkably long time to evolve. In its earliest shape, for instance, it was little more than an elevated dot to separate words, and even by the beginning of the Middle Ages the period and the inverted semicolon were the only marks of punctuation used in English handwritten compositions (Petti 1977, 25). From the twelfth century onwards, however, there was a bias among scribes to abandon ancient systems of punctuation in favour of a general repertory, which developed from a gradual incorporation of elements drawn from ancient methods, and was augmented from other specialised systems appearing throughout Middle English so that, by the end of this period, the general repertory was based on four principal components: i) the *punctus*, generally employed in combination with other symbols; ii) the *punctus elevatus*, used to indicate a median pause; iii) the '7'-shaped *positura*, purposed to specify the end of a section; and iv) the paragraph mark, used both to indicate the divisions in a text and in references to these splits in other works (Parkes 1992, 41-43). Despite this theory, the actual

practices of later mediaeval scribes were notably determined by their idiosyncratic preferences insofar as they were free to employ their own inventory of symbols without full consistency (Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 2012, 32; see also Derolez 2003, 185) and, more importantly, by the ultimate function of punctuation, which might serve either for grammatical or rhetorical purposes. The former help make grammatical structure of sentences explicit, whilst the latter indicate the pauses introduced for an oral delivery of a text (Clemens and Graham 2007, 82).[2] Overall, the punctuation of this period was remarkably light and did not reflect the grammatical organization of sentence constituents, but the pauses necessary for a significant rhetorical production (Greetham 1994, 223).

The Early Modern English period, on the other hand, witnessed the continuous evolution from the rhetorical to the grammatical function of punctuation, as expected of a language acquiring a strict word order, the progressive development of a standardised system due to the establishment of Caxton's printing-press, together with the proliferation of a number of professional penmen (van Gelderen 2006, 174-175; Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 2007, 357). Although the earliest printed specimens reproduced the forms of punctuation observed in handwritten documents used for copy, Elizabethan printers, unlike scribes, gently attained a level of standardisation in the shape of punctuation devices used in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe, with the result that a good deal of new punctuation symbols were introduced into the system which, shortly after their incorporation, became "immersed in a process of specialisation for the expression of new syntactic relations" (Calle-Martín and Esteban-Segura 2018, 68; Parkes 1992, 50-51; Salmon 1999, 40-41).

Even though the phenomenon has been ignored as a consequence of its suggested haphazardness, the last decades have observed the spread of a vast amount of quantitative and qualitative

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[2] Apart from these two main categories, Lucas (1971, 5) added the macro-textual function, whereby the phenomenon may work as an aid to elucidate the disposition and the layout of a text (see also Marqués-Aguado 2005, 50).

studies offering detailed accounts of the uses, functions and dissemination of punctuation patterns across individual texts, mainly from a synchronic perspective, in Old English (Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 2005a; Esteban-Segura 2005; Marqués-Aguado 2005) Middle English (Rodríguez-Álvarez 1998; Alonso-Almeida 2001; Calle-Martín 2004; Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 2005b; Marqués-Aguado 2009, 2019; Esteban-Segura 2009; de la Cruz-Cabanillas 2014), as well as in Early Modern English (Alonso-Almeida and Ortega-Barrera 2014; Romero-Barranco 2019; Criado-Peña 2020). In addition to this, a new wave of diachronic approaches have also emerged recently to cast some light on the standardisation of punctuation and its level of specificity both in handwritten and printed compositions (Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 2007; Calle-Martín and Esteban-Segura 2018; Claridge, 2019; Calle-Martín, 2019). Notwithstanding this broad increase in the number of works, the study of the phenomenon in different formats of identical pieces is still a *desideratum* in the specific literature inasmuch as it has been hitherto disregarded, perhaps as a result of a preconceived assumption that manuscripts employed a lighter and less consistent repertory than printed books (Petti 1977, 25).

All this considered, the present article focuses on the use and dissemination of the symbols attested in a handwritten and a printed version of the same text, so as to evaluate the contrasts and similarities between scribes and printers' punctuation practices. The study, therefore, is conceived with a twofold objective: a) to examine their quantitative distribution, and b) to analyse their role at different textual levels, i.e. macro-textual, sentence, clause and phrase level. For these purposes, the article has been organised as follows. Section 2 provides a brief description of the material used as source of evidence and the methodology followed in the classification of the results; section 3 deals with the analysis and comparison of the symbols in both texts; and, finally, section 4 offers a summary of the findings along with some conclusions.

2. Methodology

The material whereon this research focuses is Girolamo Ruscelli's *The Secrets of Alexis*, one of the most important scientific collections of the sixteenth century given its wide circulation over a long period of time. Ruscelli's original work was highly appreciated in the period, being preserved in 69 printed editions in Early Modern English with a great number of vernacular translations, not only in English, but also in other European languages such as Italian, French, Dutch or Spanish, to name but a few (Ferguson 1930: 234-235). As far as handwriting is concerned, the English translation of the text has only been kept in Glasgow, University Library, MS Ferguson 7 (FER7), ff. 1r-20v. Since 2019, this manuscript forms part of the major research project entitled *The Málaga Corpus of Early Modern English Scientific Prose*, which pursues the semi-diplomatic transcription and the electronic edition of hitherto unedited Early Modern English scientific manuscripts from the period 1500-1700, displaying both the digitised images and the corresponding transcription (Figure 1).[3]

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[3] The edition can be viewed online at http://modernmss.uma.es. Apart from this objective, the project also pursues the compilation of a raw, a normalised and a POS-tagged corpus from this material, thus representing the main branches of early English scientific writing (i.e. specialised treatises, surgical treatises and medical recipes).
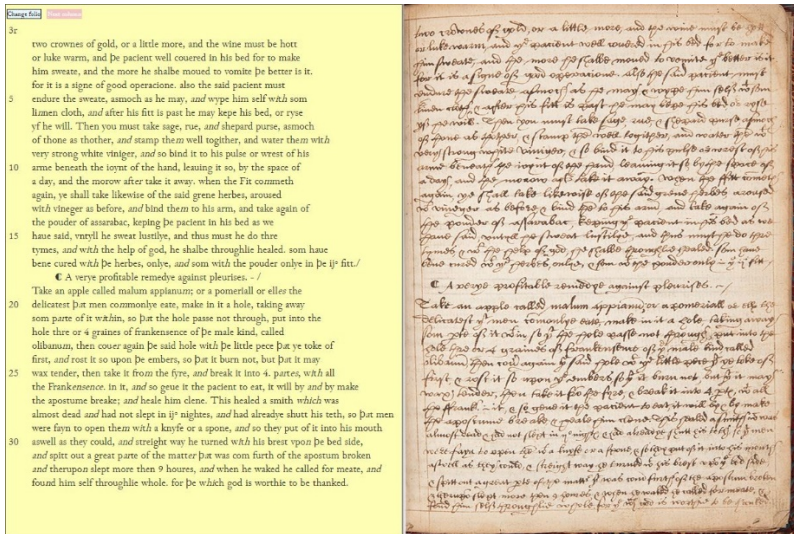
Figure 1. Electronic edition of FER7

The manuscript holds a huge quantity of passages written in a late-sixteenth century cursive script from the original English translation of the collection, many of them taken from an edition printed at London in 1568. In this vein, the text of FER7 (hereafter *Secreti*) and the said printed material (henceforth *PSecreti*) have therefore been selected as the input for the analysis of the phenomenon in Early Modern English handwriting and printing.[4]

On purely methodological grounds, 6,092 symbols of punctuation have been identified, of which 2,661 are found in the manuscript variant and the remaining 3,431 in the printed composition. Nevertheless, as the number of running words is different from one of the text to the other, the figures have been normalised up to 10,000 words for the sake of comparison. Consequently, the final database of examples has been reduced to 1,495.45 and 1,546.82 instances in the handwritten and the printed

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[4] It must be noted that, as the printed edition used as source of evidence does not contain some of the passages included in FER7, the printed material has been supplemented with two other English editions published in 1563 and 1566. The three printed texts can be accessed online at https://proquest.com.

text, respectively. Finally, the items have been classified and analysed independently according to the sign of punctuation and its different textual functions.

3. Analysis

The repertory of punctuation present in our material is fairly extensive as it contains a great deal of symbols, including the comma, the period, the colon, the semicolon, the parenthesis, the paragraph mark, the hyphen, the virgule, the brace, the caret, accents, and line-fillers.[5] Among all these, however, the last five marks are uniquely witnessed in the handwritten piece, thus suggesting the theory that printed books employed a wider inventory than manuscripts as erroneous.

3.1. The Comma

The comma was introduced in England in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, owing its spread in great part to printers, and it was thought to have evolved from a short form of the virgule, which it often superseded. Even though its uses are reported to be erratic in a number of Renaissance documents, legal proclamations in particular (Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 2007, 367-371), there is a consensus in the relevant literature so as to state that the comma was used mainly as indicator of short pauses in the sense-unit (Tannenbaum 1930, 140; Petti 1977, 26; see also Preston and Yeandle 1999, x).

As in other relevant studies on the topic (Alonso-Almeida and Ortega Barrera 2014, 156-159), the comma is by far the most common mark of registering punctuation in our source material. In quantitative terms, as shown in Table 1, this punctuation device is

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[5] Although not punctuation signs *stricto sensu*, line-fillers have been dealt with in the analysis of the pieces since several palaeographic handbooks (see Derolez 2003; Tannenbaum 1930; Petti 1977; Preston and Yeandle 1999; Clemens and Graham 2007) includes them as part of the Early Modern English general repertory of punctuation.

more widely favoured in the printed book than in its handwritten homologous.

	Secreti	*PSecreti*
Comma	879.51	977.41

Table 1. Distribution of the comma in the texts (n.f.)

There is, however, some room for functional variation in the distribution of the comma across the texts insofar as this punctuation device indicates all sorts of linguistic relationships. At the sentential level, on the one hand, the comma is used with a number of functions constrained to the association or separations of both independent and dependent sense-units, which can be further classified into the following set of subfunctions:

a) To introduce coordinate sentences:

(1) "(…) is m*er*ueylous good for all kind of wou*ndes*, *and* ye must wete *and* moist the wou*n*d wi*th* it, *and* bind upon it a pece of linnen cloth   (…)" (*Secreti*, f. 2r).

b) To introduce sequential markers:

(2) "(…) fyrste washe the E-

morawdes with white wine very hote, than laye vpon

them some of the sayde pouder (…)" (*PSecreti*, 1563, p. 14).

c) To indicate the beginning of a new statement:

(3) "Take .7. or. 9. of the long *and* red bearyes of a wild rose tree, *and* lett the*m* be rype, bray the*m* well, *and* geue the pacient (…)" (*Secreti*, f. 17v).

d) To provide explanatory comments or additional information, either superfluous or relevant, to the reader:

(4) "A playster mitigatiue, and very gentle for Cankers, specially of the brests or Pappes. (*PSecreti*, 1566, p. 50).

e) To introduce different types of subordinate clauses, whether nominal, adjectival or adverbial clauses:

(5) "(…) ye shall find the wou*n*d so wyde *and* larg*e*, *and* the yron so discouered, þ*at* you may take it out w*ith* your fingers./" (*Secreti*, f. 10r).

f) To connect main and subordinate clauses:

(6) "(…) and yf yo*ur* sight be perished

or half gone, it will heale it *and* recou*e*r it p*er*fectly again." (*Secreti*, f. 15v).

g) To introduce non-finite forms of verbs:

(7) "(…) and adde to it of good oyle Oliue about the height of . ij .fingers, leauing it so in the sayde glasse wel stopped (…)" (*PSecreti*, 1568, p. 15).

The results in Figure 2 show that the comma occurs with different distributions in both the manuscript and the printed version of the piece. When it comes to printing, this device develops more repeatedly for the introduction of coordinate sentences, subordinate clauses and non-finite forms of verbs, the association between main and subordinate clauses, and the insertion of explanatory comments to the reader. In handwriting, in turn, it is more extensively found for the marking off of new statements, and the introduction of sequential markers.
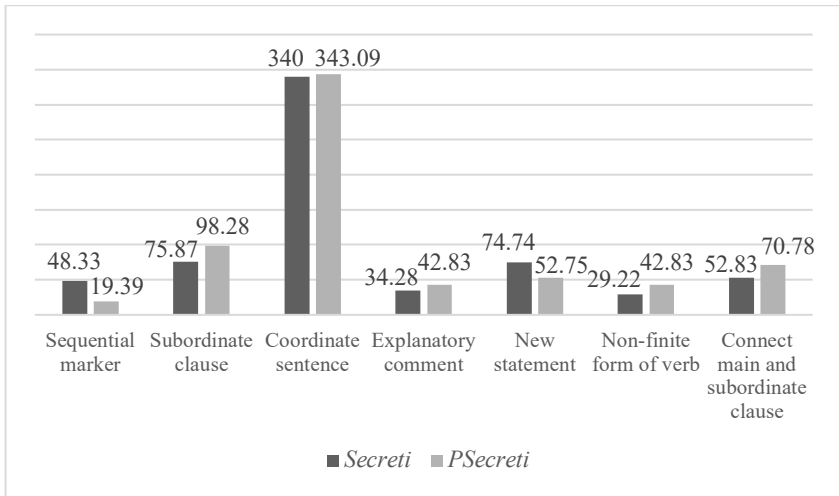
Figure 2. Functions of the comma at sentential level (n.f.)

At the clause level, on the other hand, the comma contributes to signal divergent relations established within the clause domain such as to enumerate, to enclose appositions, to precede coordinate phrases or to associate the clause constituents, among others. In the present compositions, it presents the following set of purposes:

a) To enumerate items:

(8) "Take Betony, Rue, Selandine, Saxifrage, Leuistici, Pulegium, Annice, Synamon, Euphrasia (…)" (*PSecreti*, 1566, p. 31).

b) To introduce sets of items:

(9) "(…) then take these pouders, aristolochia both of long *and* rou*n*de, mastick myrre, dragons blood, called in English pellitorye of spayn, aloe Epati-cu*m*, nill   (…)" (*Secreti*, f. 3v).

c) To split short units in a series comprising internal punctuation:

(10) "Take wheate, and mixe it with the milke of the herbe

called in latin Herba lactaria, in French Tintimaille:

or herbe a laite in English Spurge, that hath milke in it,

in greeke Tithymalos, which is an herbe well inoughe

knowen (…)" (*PSecreti*, 1563, p. 74).

d) To indicate coordination of phrases, especially with enumerated items:

(11) "(…) wel stamped Butter, Hogs
suet, Leuen, Cowe milke, and a little Saffron. " (*PSecreti*, 1568, p. 33).

e) To denote appositional phrases:

(12) "(…) you may put in what colour ye will, that is to say,

Red, yellow, or other w*ith* a little rock alome. ~ ~ ~ ~"
(*Secreti*, f. 12v).

f) To link the clause constituents:

(13) "(…) then put him to burne in an Ouen, so that al, as well the bones, and the skinne, as the flesh, be brought to pouder: this done, ye (…)" (*PSecreti*, 1568 p. 26).

Figure 3 reproduces the dissemination of the comma at the clause level in our material, where the data, similarly to the picture obtained at sentential level, confirm a higher spread of this mark in the printed format of the witness for almost all the mentioned purposes, with the only exception of the function whereby the comma introduces sequences of items.
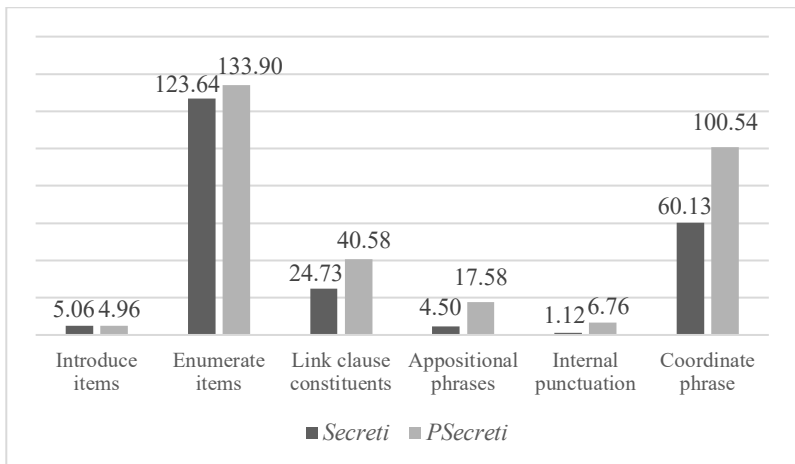
Figure 3. Functions of the comma at clausal level (n.f.)

At the macro-textual level, in turn, the comma is sporadically applied in the witnesses to indicate the end of paragraphs (1.12 examples in *Secreti*), and to mark off the end of an array of section titles (1.12 and 3.16 instances in handwriting and printing, respectively).

In addition to these uses, the comma is found to only operate at the phrasal level in *Secreti*, where the scribe sometimes chooses it as the appropriate punctuation device to circumscribe some numerals (2.25 instances).
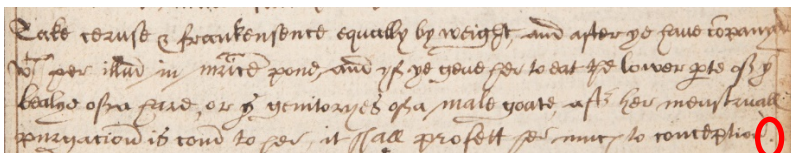
3.2.   The Period

The period is the oldest punctuation mark of the English system, and develops from the ancient Greek repertory, which used a raised, medium, or low period according to the typology of pause. From a chronological perspective, the period undertook a process of specialisation which ranged from a haphazard use, being utilised to convey all types of sentential, clausal and phrasal relationships (Calle-Martín and Miranda García 2007, 363-367; Calle-Martín 2004, 407-422; Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 2005b, 45-64), to a standardised practice whereby it came to express a major pause with rough equivalence to a full stop. Still, it could also work as a kind of comma until the beginning of the seventeenth century (Petti 1977, 25).

Even though the period has been found, in the light of its wide variety of functions, to be the predominant sign in the repertories of some documents from both the late Middle English (Esteban-Segura 2009, 96; Marqués-Aguado 2019, 242) and the Early Modern English period (Romero-Barranco 2019, 64), it is the second most recurrent punctuation mark in the texts under examination, falling thoroughly behind the comma. As shown in Table 2, the period presents an asymmetrical dispersal as regards the format, as it turns out to occur with a substantially higher frequency in the printed version of the composition.
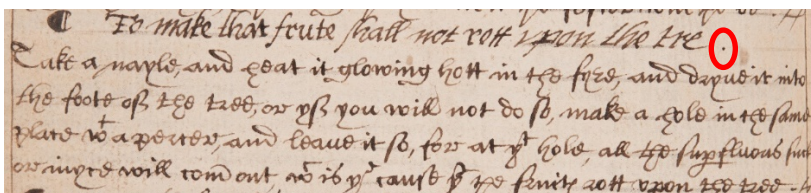
	Secreti	*PSecreti*
Period	218.61	316.94

**Table 2.** Distribution of the period in the texts (n.f.)

As far as its functions are concerned, the period is used for numerous linguistic purposes in the different specimens. First, at the macro-textual level, it contributes to the arrangement and organisation of the structural units of the texts with the following purposes: to mark off the end of paragraphs (Figure 4); to indicate the end of section titles (Figure 5); and to introduce section titles (Figure 6).

Figure 4. The period indicating the end of a paragraph (*Secreti*, f. 7v)


Figure 5. The period indicating the end of a section title (*Secreti*, f. 9v)
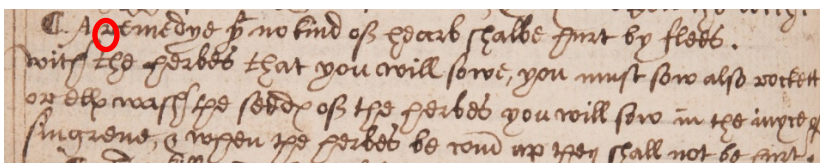
Figure 6. The period introducing a section title (*Secreti*, f. 11v)

As observed in Figure 7, this punctuation sign exhibits a contrasting distribution in view that it is more vaguely employed to indicate the end of paragraphs in the printed variant, whilst it seems to be preferred as a mean to mark off the end of section titles in the manuscript book. This divergent diffusion may be based on the prominent use of the virgule as an indicator of the end of some

paragraphs in handwriting (see Section 3.8). Besides this difference, it is also worth noting that, when appearing in combination with the paragraph mark, the period is employed in *Secreti* to precede a handful of section titles.
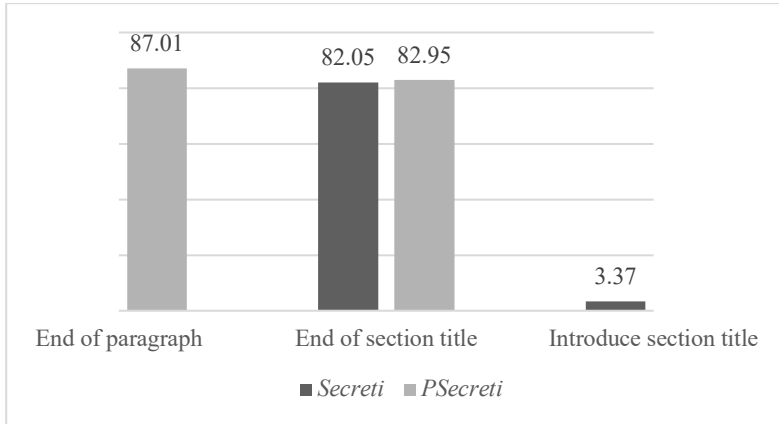
Figure 7. Functions of the period at macro-textual level (n.f.)

Second, at the sentence level, the period performs a variety of functions concerned with the establishment of the relationships between sentences. As illustrated in Figure 8, this punctuation device is outstandingly more numerous in the printed format of the piece for each of the sentential uses attested, which are enumerated below:

a) To introduce coordinate sentences:

(14) "(…) put your Woode, bone, or horne in it. And let all seeth well together." (*PSecreti*, 1568, p. 50).

b) To introduce sequential markers:

(15) "(…) after his fitt is past he may kepe his bed, or ryse yf he will. Then you must take sage, rue, *and* shepard purse, asmoch of thone as thother (…)" (*Secreti*, f. 3r).

c) To mark off the beginning of a new statement:

(16) "You shall take crums of bread, raysins dryed in an oven or otherwise, *and* then well stamped, butter, hogs suet, leuen,

cowe milk *and* a little saffron. make of all this an oyntment (…)" (*Secreti*, f. 5r).

d) To provide explanatory comments or additional information to the reader:

(17) " (…) geue the pacient drink therof thre mornfng*es*, þ*at* is to say euery morning a glasfull. this hath bene p*r*oued in venyce an*n*o 1504." (*Secreti*, f. 7r).

e) To introduce subordinate clauses, including relative clauses, and adverbial clauses of condition, time and cause:

(18) "(…) leauing it so by the space of a day, and the mo-row after, take it away. When the fit cometh agayn, ye shal take likewise of the sayd greene herbes (…)" (*PSecreti*, 1568, p. 20).

f) To separate the different parts that compose a section:

(19) "(…) and spreade thys oyntment vppon a lynnen clothe *and* it wil profit you very much. Another for the same . Take some strong white vinaigre (…)" (*PSecreti*, 1563, p. 69).
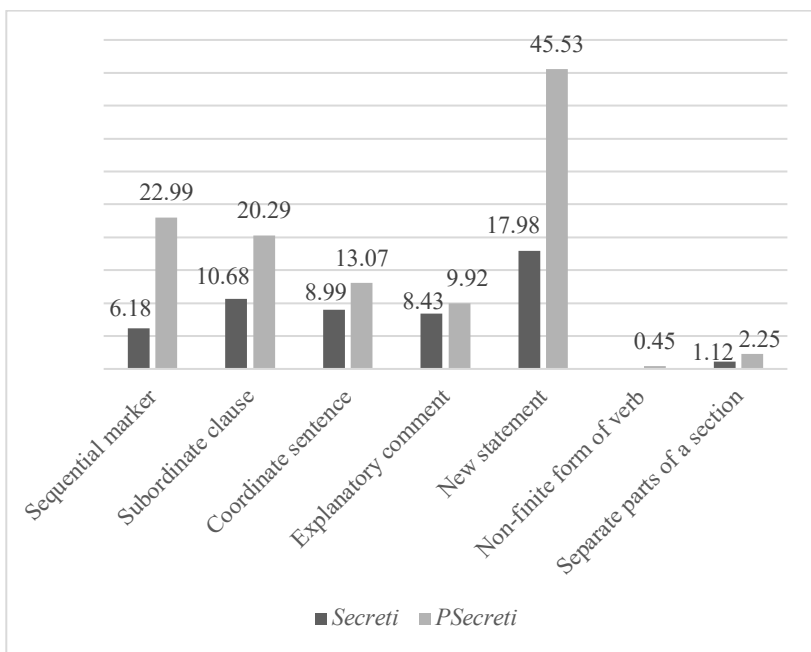
Figure 8. Functions of the period at sentential level (n.f.)

Third, the period runs sporadically at the clause level, where it is applied to introduce items (0.56 and 0.45 examples in *Secreti* and *PSecreti*, respectively), and to enumerate items in a series (1.12 instances in handwriting and 0.45 in printing), thus overlapping with other punctuations marks.

Finally, at phrasal level, the period is used to indicate abbreviations, and to circumscribe numerals, both Roman and Arabic. Figure 9 then reproduces the distribution of the phrasal functions of the period, where it is observed that this means of registering punctuation is almost exclusively employed for the latter purpose in the two documents.
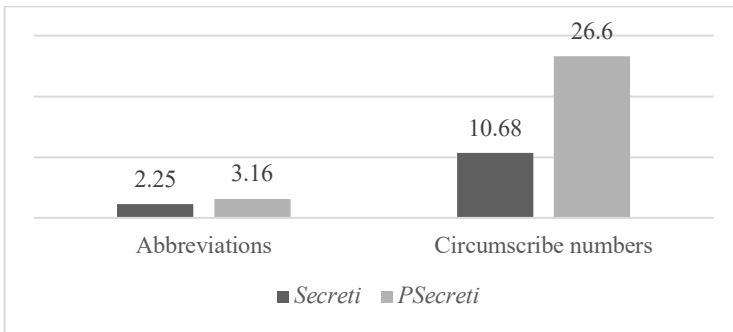
Figure 9. Functions of the period at phrasal level (n.f.)

3.3. The Colon

The colon, originally a raised point, was relatively popular across handwritten pieces from the second half of the mediaeval period, where it primarily served to indicate full and intermediate pauses, and developed as an alternative punctuation item to the ancient inverted semicolon (Derolez 2003, 185; Alonso-Almeida 2001, 222). In the Renaissance, it gained some ground as it not only worked for rhetorical purposes, but also to denote abbreviations and to enclose numerals. In many dramatic manuscripts, moreover, the colon could be used as a substitute for commas, question marks, exclamation marks and periods, or in combination with a virgule to conclude a paragraph or represent the adverb *videlicet*. (Tannenbaum 1930, 142; Petti 1977, 26).

In the present compositions, the colon offers a similar quantitative spread to the comma and the period in what concerns the format of the texts, given the fact that it is more prone to appear in the printed book than in the handwritten counterpart (100.54 vs 45.52 occurrences, respectively).

	Secreti	*PSecreti*
Colon	45.52	100.54

Table 3. Distribution of the colon in the texts (n.f.)

From a functional viewpoint, this punctuation symbol displays a number of divergent purposes at the different textual levels across the scrutinised texts. First, at the sentence level, the colon is employed with manifold functions: (20) to precede coordinate sentences; (21) to introduce sequential markers; (22) to delimit the beginning of a new statement; (23) to provide explanatory comments or additional information to the reader; (24) to introduce subordinate clauses; (25) to connect main and subordinate clauses; and (26) to introduce non-finite forms of verbs. Figure 10 then offers the distribution of this sign at sentential level in the two documents under examination, where it may be observed that the printed book is again at the top of the continuum for most of the functions.

(20) "(…) before it beginne to flourish or haue floures: and stamp it in a morter or Marble, or wood (…)" (*PSecreti*, 1568 p. 15).

(21) "Take drye vernish, amber, alom, of the two asmoch of thone as of thother: then take vernish *and* oile of linseed (…)" (*Secreti*, f. 18v).

(22) "(…) as much of þe flour of linseed, an ou*nce and half*

of honye: mingle all well togither, stamping it in a morter (…)" (*Secreti,* f. 15r).

(23) "(…) anoynt well yo*ur* face w*ith* it. 3 or 4 dayes, *and* it will make yo*ur* face fayrer: a thinge fou*n*d true by experience." (*Secreti*, f. 7v).
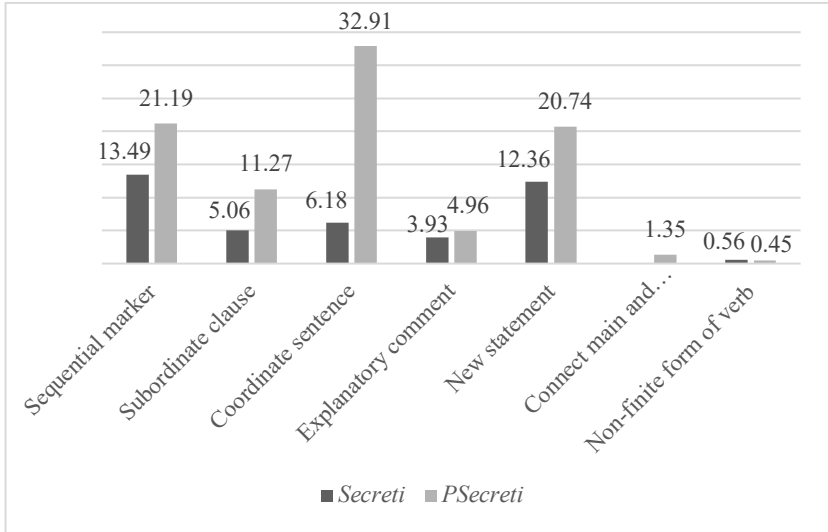
(24) "(…) and couer him with a leafe: if it

be the kings euill, the Worme wyll chaunge and

tourne into earth (…)" (*PSecreti*, 1566 p. 37).

(25) "(…) If in case the fire goe out in the

night ther is no great danger: ye may make it again in the morning (…)" (*PSecreti*, 1568, p. 16).

(26) "(…) þe sid*es* w*i*th potters clay in a moiste caue or seller: setting vnder it a glasse, w*hi*ch may (…)" (*Secreti*, f. 20v).

Figure 10. Functions of the colon at sentential level (n.f.)

Secondly, the colon is used at the clause level with three different functions: (27) to introduce a sequence of items (1.12 and 0.90 occurrences in *Secreti* and *PSecreti*, respectively); (28) to list diverse items in a series (1.69 and 6.76 examples in *Secreti* and *PSecreti*, respectively); and (29) to associate the clause constituents (just 0.56 instances in *Secreti*).

(27) "(…) boile in it these thing*es* following: lycoras, ysop, sage rosemarye, carduus benedictus (…)" (*Secreti*, f. 6r).

(28) "Take Saffron, Poppy, Franke*n*cense of the male kinde

of eche a Dragme: Lithargyri, Plu*m*bi vsti loti two

Dragmes, Ceruse prepared an vnce *and* a halfe: white

Waxe two vnces, Goose grease, newe and fresh Butter (…)" (*PSecreti*, 1566 p. 50).

(29) "The yolke of an egg mixte w*ith* a little barley floure or wheat flour putting to it honye rosett: it is very swete, *and* meet for a delicate body. ~" (*Secreti*, f. 18r).

Finally, the colon, though scarcely, is also employed in the manuscript book at the macro-textual level to indicate the end of a section title.

3.4. The Semicolon

The semicolon was introduced in the English general repertory of punctuation at the end of the fifteenth century as an aid to produce a fine-grained discrimination between the comma and the colon, particularly in those linguistic environments where "the comma was considered to be insufficient and the colon slowed up the utterance prominently" (Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 2007, 317; Parkes 1992, 49). Its use, however, was sporadic in English texts until the third quarter of the sixteenth century (Tannenbaum 1930, 142; Salmon 1999, 40), when it progressively developed as the standard symbol to indicate an intermediate pause between periods and commas, and to call attention to a noticeable transition from one idea to another.

Unlike the colon, the semicolon is found to diffuse more frequently in the manuscript version of the text, presenting an amount of 6.74 occurrences, to the detriment of the printed specimen, where it has been identified in just 2.71 instances.

	Secreti	*PSecreti*
Semicolon	6.74	2.71

Table 4. Distribution of the semicolon in the texts (n.f.)

When it comes to its functions, the semicolon is likewise found to display some of the functions of the colon, albeit to a lesser degree. In this vein, it is mainly employed at the sentence level with the following purposes: to introduce coordinate sentences, as in (30); to introduce sequential markers, as in (31); to delimit the

beginning of new statements, as in (32); to introduce subordinate clauses, as in (33); and to connect main and subordinate clauses, as in (34). Figure 11 then reveals that, except for the introduction of subordinate clauses, this unit of punctuation is more regularly witnessed in the handwritten specimen for almost all sentential functions.

> (30) "(…) it will by *and* by make the apostume breake; *and* heale him clene." (*Secreti*, f. 3r)

> (31) "(…) ye shall take of theyr dou*n*ge, not to fresh nor to drye; then distill it fayr *and* softly (…)" (*Secreti*, f. 4r).

> (32) "Take the rootes of Lapathum acutum, called Sorell, as
> wel wylde, as of the garden; wash them wel, and mun-
> difie them, and (…)" (*PSecreti*, 1568, p. 70).

> (33) "(…) And hold not the infected membre too farre from
> the fire; to the intent that whilest the dead fleshe is consu-
> myng and eating away, you feele not so greate a paine."
> (*PSecreti*, 1568 p. 35).

> (34) "(…) yf a man vse it as is afforsaid,
> in wynter; it is not possible for him to be vexed or torment-
> ed w*ith* þe cough, reumes (…)" (*Secreti*, f. 6r).
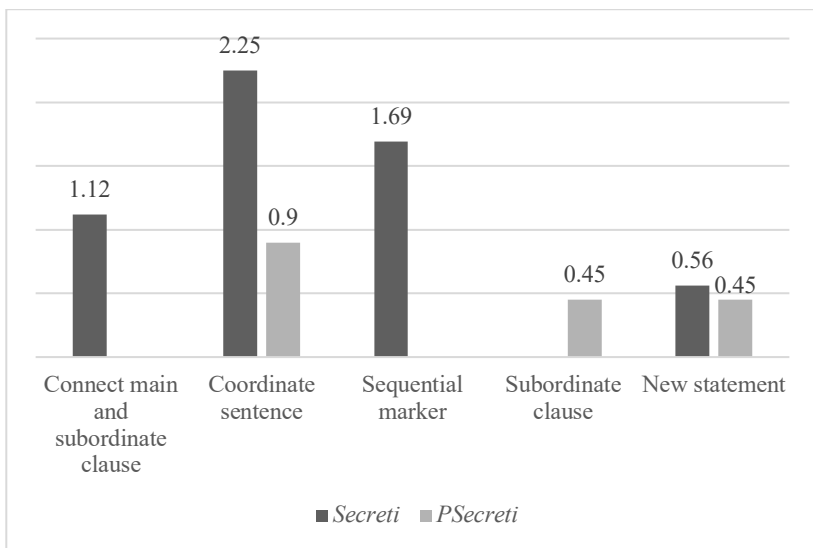
Figure 11. Functions of the semicolon at sentence level (n.f.)

Although marginally, the semiclon operates as well at the clause level in both documents in order to enumerate some items in a series (0.56 instances in *Secreti* and 0.45 *PSecreti*, respectively), and to precede coordinate phrases (0.45 examples in *PSecreti*).

3.5. The Parenthesis

The parenthesis was in vogue very early in English texts as a result of the contribution of the humanist author Coluccio Salutati, who is thought to have introduced this punctuation mark at the end of the fourteenth century (Derolez 2003, 186; Parkes 1992, 84). In the Renaissance period, this unit could be employed for manifold purposes: i) to provide supplementary data; ii) to introduce exclamations, interjected sentences, quotation marks, vocative appellations and asides; iii) to emphasise significant adjectival or adverbial words and phrases; iv) to indicate the speaker; or v) to denote an alternative version in a draft (Tannenbaum 1930, 144; Petti 1977, 27).

When it comes to the texts under scrutiny, the parenthesis, which statistically speaking is slightly more recurrent in printing, offers a homogeneous picture in terms of its linguistic practicality as it is

always used at sentential level in order to provide parenthetical information to the reader, either unnecessary or important, about the topic involved.

	Secreti	*PSecreti*
Parenthesis	5.06	5.86

Table 5. Distribution of the parenthesis in the texts (n.f.)

3.6. The Paragraph Mark

The paragraph mark emerged as an aid to detect the boundaries of propositions, sentences, or stages in the development of arguments in a straightforward manner (Parkes 1992, 44). In early English, this punctuation symbol was conveniently divided into the *paragraphus* and the *capitulum*. The former had several shapes as it could consist of a figure resembling a long-doubled secretary <s>, a fat *sigma*, a capital *gamma*, or a large <q> with a thickened bowl. The latter, in turn, evolved from a cursive capital <C> which looked like an <a> with a headstroke (Petti 1977, 27; Tannenbaum 1930, 147). Functionally speaking, the specific distinction between these two marks was somewhat ambiguous from a chronological perspective. In Middle English, on the one hand, the *paragraphus* could introduce a new paragraph, whilst the *capitulum* normally meant a new heading or chapter, though it also functioned as a medial pause or formed part of a caesura. In Early Modern English, on the other hand, their functions were more rigorously restricted to paragraph and chapter headings, with the *capitulum* lagging well behind the *paragraphus* (Petti 1977, 27).

In the particular case at hand, the results, as shown in Table 6, reveal a considerably low recurrence of the paragraph mark in the printed document, presenting just 22.54 occurrences, a negligible figure if compared with the total attested in the manuscript specimen (108.46 instances). From a qualitative viewpoint, this means of registering punctuation clearly displays a macro-textual function in the material as it is at all times used to introduce new sections or recipes. Curiously enough, it should be noted that while the *capitulum* (represented as "❡") is the type of paragraph mark

employed in the handwritten version of the text, the *paragraphus* (rendered as "¶") is the unit used in its printed counterpart.

	Secreti	*PSecreti*
Paragraph mark	108.46	22.54

Table 6. Distribution of paragraph marks in the texts (n.f.)

3.7.   The Hyphen

The hyphen is an ancient punctuation symbol whose origins may be traced back to the thirteenth century. Its main functions, according to Petti, were to indicate line-final word division and, to a lesser extent, to join compound words (1977, 26-27). Notwithstanding these limited purposes, this mark was not methodically employed by scriveners and printers since some words split at the end of lines might be separated without hyphenation, while certain compounds could be written together or separated as two words (Marqués-Aguado 2009, 67; Tannenbaum 1930, 146).

In the present documents, the hyphen, as expected, does not display a specific function at the different textual levels inasmuch as it only served to illustrate words broken by the end of some lines. On quantitative grounds, the data in Table 7 show that the hyphen is more prone to occur in the printed compositions (120.82 instances), whilst its frequency in the handwritten homologous is sporadic (8.99 occurrences).

	Secreti	*PSecreti*
Hyphen	8.99	120.82

Table 7. Distribution of the hyphen in the texts (n.f.)

3.8. The Virgule

The virgule is an oblique stroke, of diverse length, thickness and embellishment that appeared in English texts "towards the end of the 13th century and was used as a general factotum by the 15th century, often doing service for the period and the inverted semicolon, albeit its most frequent function was roughly equivalent to the comma" (Petti 1977, 26). The Elizabethan virgule, by contrast, presented a wider variety of functions inasmuch as it could replace almost any punctuation mark whatsoever. Nevertheless, as the comma made their appearance in England, the virgule gradually abandoned its conventional flexibility and became the preferred mark to signal the end of paragraphs or other major sections in the text (Tannenbaum 1930, 143; Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 2007, 361).

Represented as a single slash (/), as a double slash (//), or in combination with the period (./), (./.), usually referred to as the perioslash (Arakelian 1975, 619; see also Rodríguez-Álvarez 1998, 29; Calle-Martín 2004, 409; de la Cruz-Cabanillas 2014, 149-150), the virgule is found to operate uniquely at the macro-textual level in the manuscript version of the piece, with a total of 35.96 occurrences, of which 22.48 are used to point out the end of paragraphs, and the remaining 13.49 to mark off the end of some section titles.

3.9. The Brace

Different types of brace emerged in Early Modern English to surround writing items. It might have either a similar central culminating point as it has in present-day English, especially when used in commercial accounts, or they could be square, being employed by some early dramatist and copyists to separate stage directions from the main text and the names of characters from the speeches, and to connect rhymes (Petti 1977, 27; Tannenbaum 1930, 147). In *Secreti*, the brace is found in 8.99 instances in its curly shape, where it is applied to enclose the lines composing some section titles, as in Figure 12.
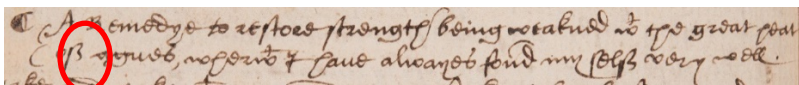
**Figure 12.** Brace in a section title (f. 14v)

3.10. The Caret

The caret is one of the oldest marks of punctuation employed to indicate scribal omission of letters or words and its subsequent insertion between the writing lines (de la Cruz-Cabanillas 2014, 153; Tannenbaum 1930, 147). Even though it occurred as two oblique strokes in the first half of the Middle English period, it has progressively formed itself into a pointed arch, "in which form it has continued with minor variations to present day […] though it was sometimes inverted" (Petti 1977, 27). The caret, which amounts to just 3.93 instances, is prone to appear in the manuscript below the line, whilst the letter(s) or word(s) to be inserted are placed above it, as shown in Figure 13.
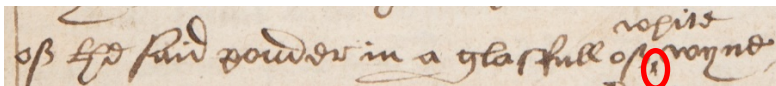
Figure 13. Caret in f. 7r

3.11. Accents

Accents are seldom witnessed in early English documents and their uses were usually constrained to Romance languages, Latin and French in particular, but even in these cases the actual practice was sometimes erratic (Petti 1977, 27; Tannenbaum 1930, 147). In this same fashion, accents, despite marginally (1.69 instances), are confined to appear with Latin terms in the manuscript, occurring either over the vowels (Figure 14), or under letter <e> by means of a cedilla to indicate the 'æ' ligature (Figure 15).
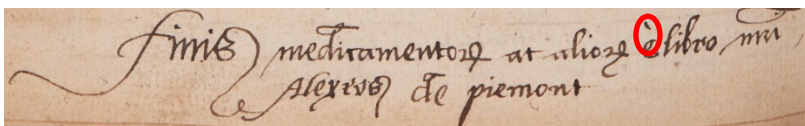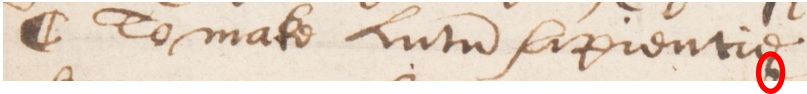

Figure 14. Accent in f. 20v

Figure 15. Cedilla in f. 20r

3.12. Line-fillers

Line-fillers are frequent visual devices used in writing in order to guarantee that lines were completed for perfect justification down the pages, and to fill up spaces to avoid illegal additions and forgeries (Petti 1977, 28; Preston and Yeandle 1999, x). These marks were sometimes intended to be merely ornamental and could easily be confused for some letters, such as <n>, <m>, <p>, <v> and <x>, among others (Tannenbaum 1930, 146). Rendered as wavy dashes (~), line-fillers are regularly used in *Secreti* (172.53 occurrences) to prevent blank spaces after the closing of some paragraphs, as in Figure 16 below.
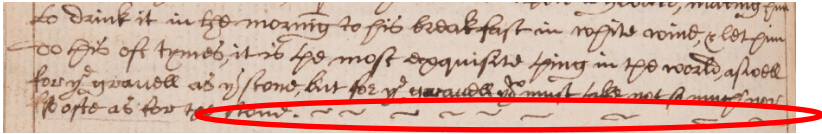

**Figure 16**. Line-fillers in f. 4v

4. Summary of the Findings and Conclusions

The present article has examined the diverse punctuation practices in two Early Modern English versions of the scientific composition entitled *The Secrets of Alexis*, paying special attention to the quantitative dimension of the phenomenon across the pieces and the qualitative analysis of the textual functions. The study has been based on the classification of the extensive repertory present in the witnesses in the light of the sign of punctuation and its different linguistic purposes, which has allowed us to determine some contrasts and similarities between them.

From a quantitative standpoint, punctuation, as expected, is more frequently attested in the printed version of the document, where it amounts to a total of 1,546.82 instances, than in the handwritten

source, presenting an incidence of 1,495.45 examples. Even though most of the signs are found to occur with a higher rate in the former material, the latter exhibits a wider inventory of punctuation in view that some units, such as the virgule, the brace, the caret, accents and line-fillers, are exclusively observed in handwriting, a fact that comes to refute, at least in our material, preconceived hypotheses affirming that manuscripts displayed a lighter repertory than printed books. Besides this, there are two symbols employed in both formats, i.e. the semicolon and the paragraph mark, presenting a higher dissemination in the handwritten variant.

From a functional standpoint, Figures 17 and 18 provide the distribution of punctuation in terms of the four linguistic levels in both versions of the text, where the phenomenon is observed to develop alike tendencies, albeit some variances may be witnessed according to the specific subfunction at hand.

15.17

187.14

224.8

761.49

■ Sentence ■ Clause ■ Macro-textual ■ Phrase
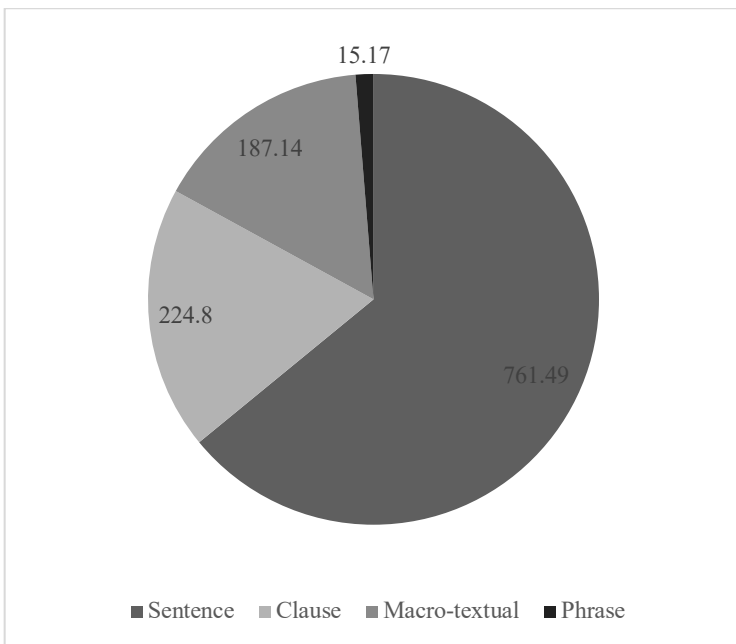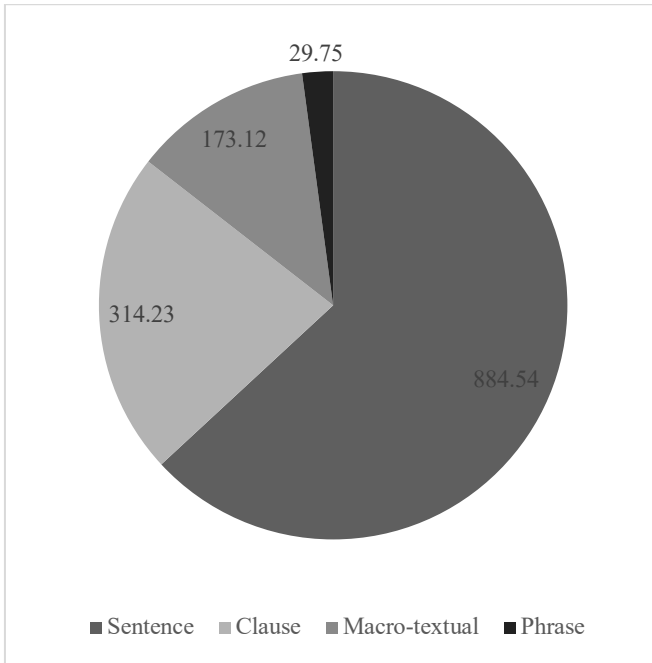
Figures 17 and 18. Punctuation at the diverse linguistic levels in *Secreti* and *PSecreti*, respectively (n.f.)

First, punctuation is outstandingly more frequent at the sentence level in the two formats of the piece as most marks are used –among other functions– to introduce coordinate sentences, subordinate clauses, to mark off the beginning of new statements, and to introduce sequential markers. There are, however, certain differences subject to the format of the piece in the form particular symbols perform some of these functions. For instance, when introducing sequential markers and new statements, the comma outnumbers the other marks in handwriting, whilst in printing the period presents a higher relative frequency as the favourite choice for the purposes, especially if compared with its incidence in the manuscript counterpart. Examples in (35) and (36) clearly illustrate how the choice of these symbols fluctuates as per the version of the text, since the scribe employs commas in some fragments where the printer renders periods.

(35)

a. (…) þe shearing or flock*es*, then pour it out, and (…) (*Secreti*, f. 19r).

b. (…) the shearing or flocks. Then poure it out, and (…) (*PSecreti*, 1566, p. 56).

(36)

a. (…) *and* sifte all those those thing*es* þ*a*t must be sifted, this done mingle them togither (…) (*Secreti*, f. 13v).

b. (…) *and* fist all those thinges that must be sifted. Thys done mingle them togither (…) (*PSecreti*, 1563, p. 74).

Some variation is also attested as regards the manner both versions coordinate sentences. Leaving aside the substantial predominance of the comma in the two documents, the printed book shows some inclination towards the use of the colon, while in the manuscript, by contrast, the period becomes the favoured symbol in this context. Likewise, a minor difference is observed in the way main and subordinate clauses are connected. Although commas are overwhelmingly preferred for this subfunction in both versions, erratic manifestations of the colon and semicolon are noticed depending on the format. The former is exclusively witnessed in the printed text (1.35 instances), whereas the latter is constrained to occur in the handwritten equivalent (1.12 instances).

Second, the phenomenon also operates frequently at the clause level on account of the high use of several signs to enumerate items in a series and to coordinate phrases. Except for the introduction of items, wherein they are slightly more recurrent in the manuscript, punctuation symbols diffuse more regularly in the printed book for all clausal functions, a foreseeable evidence considering the higher dissemination of the phenomenon in printing.

At the macro-textual level, in turn, punctuation is employed to denote the initial and final boundaries of section titles, as well as the end of paragraphs. Unlike the other textual levels, the phenomenon presents a more widespread occurrence in handwriting than in printing (187.14 vs 173.12 examples, respectively). This diffusion relies on the prominent use of the paragraph mark to introduce section titles in the handwritten text. Apart from this, there are other divergences which deserve some deal of attention, such as (i) the

use of the virgule to indicate the end of some paragraphs and section titles in handwriting (37a), as opposed to the picture offered in printing, where the period and, to a much lower extent, the comma are the unique marks employed for the purpose (37b); and (ii) the sporadic usage of the comma and the colon to specify the end of a few paragraphs and section titles in the manuscript, an unattested practice in the printed book.

> (37)
>
> a. ℂ. Against the payn of womans breastes a verye excellent remedie // (*Secreti*, f. 5r).
>
> b. ¶ Against the Paine of womens breastes, a very excellent remedie. (*PSecreti*, 1568, p. 32).

Finally, punctuation is used occasionally at the phrase level to indicate abbreviations and to enclose numerals, the period being the preferred symbol to carry out these functions both in handwriting and printing. Notwithstanding this, some sporadic instances of the comma can also be witnessed in the handwritten version of the text for the circumscription of a handful of numbers.

All in all, the data offered in this paper are solely the starting point of the analysis of Early Modern English punctuation in those environments where different versions of the same piece are considered. Further research on the topic will not only help us cast some new light on the contrasts and similarities between scribes and printers' punctuation practices, but also it will allow us to provide the literature with some fresh insights into the standardisation process in the period from a different scope. FER7 is, in this vein, an extraordinary source of evidence as, apart from *The Secrets of Alexis*, it contains other handwritten scientific treatises copied from renowned Early Modern English printed works, ergo a future examination of the phenomenon in these documents will unequivocally come to satisfy these needs.

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