

MANUSCRIPT RELATIONS THROUGH FORM AND CONTENT IN THE MIDDLE ENGLISH *CIRCA INSTANS*¹

Abstract

This article aims at contributing to the history of the transmission of the *Circa instans* in England. Taking form and content as two important linking criteria among the extant Middle English exemplars of this well-known medieval medical work, we offer here a classification and description of the different text-types and English versions of the treatise that have been identified so far. This study intends to give some insight into individual manuscript appearance and status in order to provide the reader with the necessary point of departure that will later allow for further and more detailed analyses of the relationships among the copies, such as for the future establishment of possible genealogical relations.

Keywords: Manuscripts, Textual Transmission, Middle English, *Circa instans*, Medieval Medicine.

Resumen

Con este artículo se pretende aportar una contribución a la historia de la transmisión del *Circa instans* en Inglaterra. Ofrecemos aquí una clasificación y descripción de la tipología textual y de las distintas versiones inglesas identificadas hasta ahora, tomando forma y contenido como dos criterios relevantes de relación entre los manuscritos que se han conservado de este tratado médico medieval en inglés medio. Este estudio trata de aproximarnos a la apariencia y estatus de cada una de las copias, con el fin de ofrecer al lector el punto de partida necesario para futuros análisis detallados de las relaciones textuales y genealógicas entre ellas.

Palabras clave: manuscritos, transmisión textual, Inglés Medio, *Circa instans*, medicina medieval.

1.- INTRODUCTION

About the mid-twelfth century, the celebrated School of Medicine of Salerno was witness to the composition of a medical treatise of encyclopaedic layout, which dealt with the healing virtues of the plant, animal, and mineral drugs traditionally called ‘simples.’ Its entries were alphabetically arranged, albeit loosely, with only first initials following the expected order. This *Liber de simplici medicina* –attributed to the teaching physician *Matthaeus Platearius*²–

¹ Grateful acknowledgement is here made to Peter M. Jones and Juan L. Carrillo, who kindly read earlier drafts of this article.

² *Johannes Platearius* is mentioned in incunabula and Renaissance editions. Some confusion developed among the critics with *Johannes* and *Matthaeus* Platearius. On the authorship of the *CI*, see L. Choulant (1841: 291-

is more commonly known as *Circa instans (CI)*, from the opening words of its prologue. The work originally described all its simples, beginning with their complexion, and following with the ailments for which they were prescribed, together with their method of administration. Besides, it supplied a variety of additional information concerning, for instance, the harvest time, the place of origin, the different types of the plant, animal, or mineral in question, and warnings against adulteration by fraudulent apothecaries. Although born in an academic context, *De simplicibus medicina* had an essentially practical and domestic purpose, which made it different from other scholarly products that exclusively discussed medicine from the speculative principles of natural philosophy. Thus, true as it may be that the *CI* was an authoritative reference work based on both the classical doctrine of the humours and the medieval theory of the medicinal degrees,³ the theoretical dimension was not prioritised.

The importance and long-lasting influence of the work is now unequivocal. Many translations and adaptations have survived in Latin and a good number of other languages.⁴ These manuscripts and early printed books containing texts derived from *De simplicibus medicina* clearly evince that, during its process of diffusion and vernacularization, the Salernitan treatise underwent manifold changes both in its formal appearance and textual organisation, and in the selection of its contents. Notwithstanding that variation, its exemplars still constitute several relatively homogeneous groups that result from the diverse intentions with which every new witness of the work was written. Linguistic and extra-linguistic evidence have already confirmed the circulation

292), who attributed the *CI* to Matthaesus; S. Renzi (1852: 152); G. Camus (1886: 50-52); P. Dorveaux (1913: v-x); G. A. L. Sarton (1931: 241-242).

³ On these two doctrines, see respectively P. Lain Entralgo (1970) and M. R. McVaugh (1975). On the classical sources of the *CI*, see F. H. Holler (1940).

⁴ For a more exhaustive compilation of the relevant related bibliography concerning the *CI* in Latin and the medieval versions of French, German, Dutch, Catalan, Hebrew and other languages, see A. Cuna (1993) and E. Garrido-Anes (2005a).

of the *CI* all over England in both academic and non-academic circles from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century (Garrido-Anes 2005b). The present article develops from a preliminary approach to its extant Middle English (ME) manuscripts (Garrido-Anes 2004),⁵ all of which have been roughly dated to the fifteenth century (Voigts & Kurtz 2000). Including a few more texts and fragments identified with posteriority (Garrido-Anes 2005a), I now endeavour to offer a classification of all the known ME *CI* copies. The immediate purpose of this analysis is to give an overview of the different text-types and versions that exist within the English branch of the work. The grouping and description of the copies, which are here arranged into different classes according to origin, form, content and function, intends to offer –from direct observation– some insight into individual manuscript appearance and status, and to contribute to the history of the transmission of the *CI* in England. Taking form and content as two important linking criteria among the exemplars, this study is also expected to provide with the necessary point of departure for further and more detailed analyses of the relationships among the copies, such as for the future establishment of genealogical relations. Some suspicion of close associations among specific manuscripts within each group has evolved from this approach. Nevertheless, any firm statement about it does require a further and much more minute analysis, a task which is outside the scope and aim of the present article.

2.- THE MIDDLE ENGLISH MANUSCRIPTS

For the time being, we know of twenty-seven ME manuscripts⁶ that can be associated with the book on simple medicines in question.⁷ They are here

⁵ I am thankful to the *Fundación Uriach de la Historia de la Medicina* for encouraging me to build upon my 2004 article with further texts and more detailed descriptions of the manuscripts, the result of which I present here.

⁶ Of all the consulted catalogues, L. E. Voigts & P. D. Kurtz's (2000) has been the most helpful tool for the compilation of *CI* copies. For a few other *CI* manuscripts or fragments identified later, see E. Garrido-Anes (2005a: 145-146).

divided into different types or classes that correspond to the epigraphs below. They have been assigned to one group among several within each type depending on their formal disposition and on their contents. In addition, the manuscripts are identified with a translation from which they have presumably derived (see table). Comparison with the Latin work seems to reveal the existence of three distinct English translations or compilations of the treatise.⁸ The three English renderings differ from each other in both style and diction, and in their treatment of the Salernitan core.⁹ One of these translations is represented by twenty-five out of the twenty-seven hitherto known manuscripts. Despite the abridgements or expansions that vary from one exemplar to the other, they all maintain the Latin *CI* as their main basis. A second translation¹⁰ survives in only one known manuscript, and has the

⁷ All these ME texts lack the Salernitan prologue which is found in other languages:

Latin: “Circa instans negotium de simplicibus medicinis nostrum versatur propositum [...]” (Platearius 1525: 223)

French: “En ceste presente besogne est notre propos et intention de traicter des simples medecines [...]” (Esposito 1919: 209)

German: “In disseme keghenwertigen tractatu so habe wir willen zu redene von den eynveldigen arzten [...]” (Damm 1939: 21)

Dutch: “Circa instans meninghe ghaet in simplen medicinen [...]” (London, BL, Additional 70515, fol. 124)

⁸ For the twenty-nine Latin manuscripts consulted, see E. Garrido-Anes’s list (2005a: 144). The early printed editions of the Latin *CI* there cited (2005a: 141) have also been checked, due to their similarity with two of the English translations and with the Starkenstein manuscripts with which the printed texts have been associated (Anderson 1978). All Latin references have been taken from the Lyons 1525 edition.

⁹ For an explanation of the concept of Salernitan kernel, see F. H. Holler (1940). For references to studies on the different versions of the Latin *CI*, see E. Garrido-Anes (2004: 5-6; 2005a: 141).

¹⁰ Compare these two small fragments of translation 1 and 2 respectively:

Aloe hath vertu to purge flewme and colore and hit clensith malenkoly, and hit comforyth membes that beth senewy, þat hath mony senewis, ouþer beth of the kynd of senewis. Also, hit is good aȝeyn the superfluyte of kold humers þat beth in the stomake, and releuyþ þe hed of ache þat comyth of smoke of þe stomake. (CUL Ee. 1. 13, fol. 1r)

Aloes purgys flewme and colore and clennys malencoly. Yt comfortis membrys þat be full of synus. It distrois superfluite of humors in þe stomak and helpis þe ache of þe hede. (Gonville & Caius 609/340, fol. 20r)

Salernitan book as its most important referent. A third English compilation¹¹ is likewise found in a single copy, which merges Platearius's work with some others, offering a *De simplici medicina* less easily recognizable.

2.1.- THE ME *CIRCA INSTANS* AS A VERNACULAR MEDICAL MANUAL

Six of the English manuscripts,¹² whose incipit is "Aloe is hot and dry," present their text in a way that very much resembles the Latin treatise:¹³

¹¹ Compare these two small fragments of translation 1 and 3 respectively.

<Arnoglossa, i. plauntayn or warbrode is c. and d. in 2 g. Hit is gode to clanse and drie woundes with. Hit confortiþ þe liuer, and lettiþ þe sengles to goon aboute þe body. And hit is gode for þe emeroydes. Hit kolifþ brennyng of fuir and abatifþ akyng. Hit is gode for hem þat han nose bledyng or dissenterie and for wymmen þat haue her termes to muche and to ofte, and for hem þat han þe emeroydes. And hit heliþ þe woundes of þe lijt. Þe rote of plauntayn soþen in water aswagiþ ake of teþ if þe mouþ be wassche þerwiþ. Þe iuce of plauntayn is gode for opilacon of þe reynys, and hit duþ away blake spottes and tiles. But þe sede stompid is best þerto. For a wounde þat is neþe þe nose or þe yen, do þerin wolle wet in þe iuce of plaunteyn and þe herbe stompid with swynys grece heliþ grene woundes. (Londres, BL Sloane 105, fol. 73v)>.

<Arnoglossa. Wegebreyde. Arnoglossa or planteyn yt ys colde and drye in the iide degre and yt be .ii. spyces of them [...] They be good to drye wondes & clense the stinking corrupcion yf you take the iuss mengeld wyth a littil aleopatic in puder. And yt confort the hert with water of endyff be soden inne. And put sugre therto, for yt ys a gentil manis drink in an hote cause, and the iusse of her with watter of endyff yf yt be stryketh vpon the region of the lyuer in like wyse, and yt don reproche the sacer ignis þat summe men called seynt antony ffyre [...] Also yt ys good ayenste the emoroydes yf ye take the iusse of planteyn and þe puder of the rottys of aaron, and so yt don halle maner of hurttys that cumme hert and bernnyng [...] Also, yt ys good for them that haue the passion þat ys called dyssenteria, and the fluxe of the belly and also ayenste the fluxe menstrual [...] As Pandecta, Platearius. (Londres, BL Sloane 404, fols. 37v-38r)>.

¹² See table, group A.

¹³ A typical entry of the *CI* as it was composed at Salerno would be like this: "De aloe. [*Name*]. Aloes calidum et siccum complexionis est in .ii. gradu. [*Complexion*]. Aloes ex succo herbe fit. Que herba suo nomine aloen appellatur. Hec autem herba non solum in India, Persia, et Grecia, verum etiam in Apulia reperitur. Aloes tria sunt genera: cicotrinum, epaticum, caballinum [...]. Sophisticatur autem aloe hoc modo [...]. [*Additional information*]. Aloen vero habet purgare coleram et flegmam et mundificat melancoliam. Habet etiam virtutem confortandi membra neruosa, vnde valet contra superfluitatem frigidorum humorum [...]. Stomachum confortat, caput a dolore eleuat [...]. Nota optimus aloe cum vino albo et aqua rosata confectus et in oculis iniectus pruriginem oculorum omnino aufert [...]. [*Virtues, recipe and method of administration*]." (Platearius 1525: 223-224)

London, BL, Sloane 105, fols. 66r-100v is a small quarto volume written on paper in Anglicana script with no decoration. Some of its entries (*asara baccara, altea, cerefolium, atriplex*) do not appear in the printed Latin versions of the work, but they can be found in the longer *CI* of the *Breslau Codex* (see G. Camus 1886: 54). The text of this English manuscript looks very much like that of the Salernitan kernel, of which it is quite a literal and direct translation.¹⁴ This exemplar follows the Latin *CI* very closely, as far as internal organization and contents are concerned. Except for the suppression of references to authors and other minor omissions, there is not much editorial work by the translator or compiler of this version, which is unfortunately incomplete. The first part of the opening simple is missing, and the text ends abruptly in *mirtus*.

BL, Egerton 2433, fols. 49r-54v is a large octavo on paper, written in a mixed type of Anglicana and Secretary scripts, with decorated initials and some paragraph marks in red. It presents the same translation as the previous one, and it also follows the scheme of subjects announced in the Latin prologue: name and nature of the medicine, quality, other features, and healing properties.¹⁵ However, it includes fewer simples under each letter, and it only reproduces extracts from each of them. The peculiarity of this version resides in that, as we read further on, the information for each simple becomes increasingly sketchy. It is also preserved incomplete, only up to *laudanum*.

Sloane 770, fols. 45v-48v, a small quarto written on paper in a hybrid form of Anglicana and Secretary with red initials, offers a text with the same scheme and translation as the exemplars just described, covering only from

¹⁴ See table, translation 1.

¹⁵ Circa instans negocium [...]. In tractatione vniuscuiusque medicine simplicis complexio rerum primo est intendenda consequenter vtrum sit arbor, an frutex, herba, radix, an flos, an semen, an folium, an lapis, an succus, an aliquid aliud postmodum quot sunt ipsius maneries, et qualiter fiant et in quo loco inueniantur, que etiam maneries sit melior, qualiter sophisticantur et sophisticate cognoscantur, et qualiter res conseruari possunt, et quas virtutes habeant, et qualiter debent exhiberi. (Platearius 1525: 223)

pome garnetis to zucarium, and omitting some simples beginning with P, all the R-and-S simples and some others that start with T and U.

Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College 609/340, fols. 20r-45v is a small folio on paper, written in a combination of Anglicana and Secretary features, and is the only known text offering this English rendering.¹⁶ The manuscript is not decorated, and has many additions by other scribes. Its last pages are damaged and partly torn, so the text is also incomplete. It remains legible from *aloe* to *verreyn*, but it seems to end in *zeduary*. Its last pages are much torn and difficult to read. This text –entitled *Circa instans* according to a marginal annotation in its initial page– is largely based on the Salernitan treatise, which is often explicitly cited and followed word by word in the parts taken from it. This exemplar sometimes inserts untranslated sentences in Latin. It also omits fragments from the Salernitan work, which are nonetheless kept in other versions, and it includes new material in their stead. Many of these additions do not appear in the manuscripts with the first translation, but some are similar, though not identical, to fragments from the third one and from the Latin and French *CI* texts that came to be known as *Tractatus de herbis*.¹⁷

Sloane 404, fols. 2r-243r; 294r-319v is a small quarto on paper, copied in a Secretary hand. Paragraph marks are highlighted in red. It is the only known surviving English manuscript representative of this third translation and compilation.¹⁸ Even though the core of this compendium seems to be the *CI*, this manuscript offers much interpolated information from other sources, to which the text often alludes in the course of the chapters (Pandecta, Avicenna and Serapion). Its prologue and indexes inform of a classification of the

¹⁶ See table, translation 2.

¹⁷ This illustrated *Tractatus de herbis* was known in French as *Arbolayre* (Besançon: Peter Melinger, 1486, 1487, 1488), (Paris: Pierre Le Caron, ca. 1492, ca. 1498, 1550?); or as *Grand Herbiere* (Paris: Alain Latrian & Danis Janot, 1500, 1545); it was ultimately translated into English as *The Grete Herball* (London: Peter Treveris, 1526, 1529), (London: Thomas Gybson, 1539), (London: John Kynge, 1561).

¹⁸ See table, translation 3.

simples into seven great parts, depending on whether they are: herbs in general; laxative or astringent herbs; aromatic spices; fruits, seeds, or roots; gums; salts, minerals or stones; and animals. This formal disposition is substantially different from the other English *CI* manuscripts but, to a certain extent, it reminds of the organization of one of the French branches of the work, which divides the text into five sections: herbs and flowers; trees and gums; metals and minerals; animal-derived medicines; and others (see M. Collins 2000: 283). However, Sloane 404 does not literally follow any of the French and Latin models with which it has been compared. It seems, rather, a different translation and, at the same time, a new rewriting or compilation (by itself, or copied from an unidentified manuscript) resulting from a great fusion of the *CI* with fragments from other works. This manuscript has not been preserved complete. The sixth, the seventh, and more than half of the fifth part are missing, but we know of their previous existence thanks to an index of chapters. It is interesting to highlight the fact that the first three parts of this compilation (herbs; laxative and astringent herbs; and aromatic spices) coincide with the plant classification given by the lists sometimes included in a *Tractatus virtutibus herbarum* attributed to Arnald of Villanova (MacKinney 1938: 258-259).¹⁹

Finally, *Leeds, Brotherton Library, Ripon Cathedral XVIII. H. 1[2] fols. H6r-H6v* has been here associated with the Sloane 105 translation. But even if it shares with it the theoretical description, it does not provide us with any therapeutic information. In fact, it consists only of two very small extracts taken from the very beginning of the chapters devoted to *aloe* and to *aloe pe tre*. They were very carelessly handwritten in the margins of the incunabulum of Pietro of Crescenzi's *Ruralia commoda*, printed by Peter Drach in 1493.

¹⁹ The work Mackinney refers to may well be Macer Floridus's, which often circulated under the name of Arnald of Villanova in Renaissance editions. I am grateful to P. Gil Sotres and J. A. Paniagua for their helpful comments on this matter.

Once medical compendia had been vernacularized, they were taken a step forward towards popularisation. When Latin was abandoned, those compilations became readily accessible to a larger number of people. The *CI* versions just mentioned provided a systematic description of the quality and degree of each simple, and this made them helpful handbooks for the personal use of university-trained physicians, especially when they began to work as medical practitioners. However, apart from them and the “poor scholars” (Getz 1990), the category of potential new readers would have also admitted laypeople in need of taking care of a sick person, like midwives, nuns or women from the upper classes. For all kinds of recipients, these copies would have served as self-help manuals or how-to books from which they could extract easy-to-prepare remedies.²⁰ Nevertheless, the practical utility of the *CI* within the sphere of domestic medicine made the treatise prone to further simplification in the course of its transmission. The increasing simplicity that it achieved did not only consist in the translation of the work into different vernacular languages, thus enlarging the corpus of an incipient non-Latin *Fachliteratur*.²¹ It was also the result of a reorganization and reconsideration of its contents in the endeavour to make the work more functional and more accessible, so that it could be used in an effective, quick, and simple way.

2.2.- THE ME *CIRCA INSTANS* AS A REMEDY BOOK

The *CI*-treatise or handbook in which these ME texts –like the Latin models– presented theory and practice together under each of the simples was no more than one of the possible ways in which the teachings of the

²⁰ This charitable and domestic function is very clearly expressed in the prologue of the *CI* in BL Sloane 404, which is different from the Salernitan one:

The prayours of gret nombre of povre peple that hade not thing to help them self, and be cause of that pouerte, the apotecariis reffuse them, and be cause [...] suche medicins that longe to a seke body [...] be ffound in priue places, as in gardyns wildernes and medowys [...] Any man that wil helpe him selff may haue help with smale expenses ayenst of hall manere of sekenes [...]. (fols. 2r-2v)

²¹ Prose associated with a technical or specialised register. See J. Stannard (1982).

Salernitan work were transmitted. A *CI*-remedy book also resulted from a reorganization of its contents. The text morphology and the information selected for transmission are also indicative parameters of the compilers and the scribes' intention. Another series of ME manuscripts²² goes a step further towards simplicity, exclusively maintaining the most practical information, and removing all references to theory, authors and sources from the body of the text. Sometimes, this theoretical content was expunged from the work at once. This made the *CI* adopt the appearance of a remedy book, turning the work into a useful recipe collection not only for the apothecary responsible for providing the patients with medicines, but also for those who needed self-medication. On other occasions, however, the compilers moved that theoretical basis from the main text to auxiliary ones. That is why those copies would still have been of interest to the doctor and apothecary needing the theoretical knowledge, even when the abridgement of the chapters put more emphasis on the practical content.

“Aloe is hot and dry” is the incipit shared by a few of these manuscripts:²³ *Sloane 706, fols. 21r-89v*, a small quarto on paper, written in a mixed type of Anglicana and Secretary script, with decorated red initials and paragraph marks highlighted in red; *Sloane 1764, fols. 49r-112v*, a small quarto on paper, displaying a combination of Anglicana and Secretary features, decorated with red initials; the names of the simples, given as chapter headings, appear in a more formal Textura script; *Cambridge, Jesus College Q. D. 1, fols. 75v-121r*, another small quarto on paper, written in an Anglicana hand, and containing decorated red initials; and *Cambridge, Trinity College, R. 14. 32, fols. 128r-129v, 8r-8v, 10v-11r, 18r-18v, 19r, 28r, 61r-64r*. Its foliation is not a modern one, which suggests that the manuscript circulated like this from early times. It is an octavo on paper in an Anglicana hand. First-initials decoration seems to have been intended, but never accomplished.

²² See table, groups B and C.

²³ See table, group B.

All these manuscripts begin with the name of the simple *aloe* followed by its quality, degree, some extra information, and the sicknesses it cures. However, this scheme is considerably simplified from the second simple onwards. Thus, the remaining chapters deal exclusively with the purely therapeutic information, omitting most of the other details that appeared, as a medical lesson, in the Latin and in the previously described models. The decision to reduce the amount of information found in the source treatise, and to copy only the practical details in all but the first simple, could have been made after the first entry was entirely written. Given the absence of Platearius's prologue in the English manuscripts, this might simply be interpreted as an identifying strategy. That is, by copying the first entry, or at least its initial lines as found in the model, the scribes could have been highlighting the difference between this and other alphabetical books of simples. This would have allowed the association of the English versions with the *CI* and the Salernitan tradition in spite of the changes and alterations inherent to every new copy.

These four manuscripts, which highlight the curative power of the simples by withdrawing the fragments dealing with medical theory, are very similar to another series of copies derived from the same translation. The main substantial difference between the former and those belonging to this new group²⁴ is the fact that the latter directly and exclusively present the medico-practical content from the very first article. Therefore, "Aloe hath virtue to purge phlegm and choler" is the common incipit to: *Cambridge, CUL Ee.1.13, fols. 1r-91v*. The scribe's handwriting of this octavo on paper is a combination of Anglicana and Secretary scripts, and initials are decorated in blue; *Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1477, fols. 114r-195v* is a small folio on paper. It was written in a Secretary hand with some Anglicana features, and it includes red initials and occasional red paragraph marks or letters; *Wellcome Library, London Medical Society 131, fols. 3r-56v* is a small octavo on paper, with no

²⁴ See table, group C.

decoration or illustrative matter, and written in a kind of debased Textura script, which was a typical university book hand; *BL, Additional 29301, fols. 64v-89r*, copied in a *semi-quadrata formata* Textura script, is a beautiful folio volume, on vellum, with a few illuminated borders, blue initials and red ornaments. The *CI* text of these manuscripts is basically the same as the one offered by the previous set of copies, differing from them only in their beginning. This last set of manuscripts places its emphasis on the sicknesses against which those medicines are effective. Any sporadic allusion to qualities and degrees in the text of any simple appears to be the result of the compiler or of the scribe's inadvertency rather than a conscious inclusion of that specific piece of information, which is otherwise systematically removed throughout the work.

Another four manuscripts also belong to this category of *CI* as a remedy book. However, they have not been assigned by their incipit to any of the two former groups,²⁵ either because they are acephalous texts, or because they begin with a simple different from *aloe*. They are: *Sloane 635, fols. 35r-69v*. This manuscript, much damaged by damp, is a small oblong folio written on paper. The body of the text was copied in an Anglicana script alongside Textura chapter headings; *Sloane 1088, fols. 1a-60b* is a small quarto on vellum written in a *semi-quadrata* Textura script with no decoration; *Ashmole 1481* is a small folio on vellum, copied in a mixed type of Anglicana and Secretary scripts. Space was left for decorated initials, but the task was never finished. The *CI* text appears in the manuscript in two separately bound sections: one going from *ciclamen* to *ruibarbarum* (fols. 64r-83v); and the other, from the final lines of *ruibarbarum* and the beginning of *rubea maior* to *zuccarum* (fols. 44r-49r). This same manuscript contains also a list of sicknesses based on the *CI* (fols. 54r-63v). A fourth manuscript, *Sloane 297, fols. 72r-78v*²⁶ presents isolated recipes that reproduce only extracts from the *CI*. It is a small folio, on

²⁵ See table, group 'B or C.'

²⁶ See table, group D.

paper, written in a Secretary script with some Anglicana features. Space was left for decorated initials.

When the ME copies did not offer those theoretical contents, they changed the *CI*, though only formally, from being an example of technical specialized literature in the vernacular into a remedy book, which is a format generally associated with the concept of *Rezeptliteratur*.²⁷ However, educated and well-instructed readers would still have recognized the academic origin of these medical recipes. The explanation for the removal of the theoretical information can be found in some of those same manuscripts. It becomes apparent that their medieval compilers or scribes had decided to subtract that information from the body of the text in order to present it, more conveniently, before or after the remedies, or even to transmit it independently of them in the manner of indexes, tables and concordances.

2.3.- THE ME *CIRCA INSTANS* FOR QUICK AND EASY REFERENCE

The most obvious technique used by scribes and compilers to make the information more easily available to readers was the alphabetical display of the simples. The majority of the consulted Latin manuscripts also include tables of contents that list all the medicines later dealt with in the treatise, allowing for quick finding. Instead of presenting them all together from A to Z, these *CI* copies usually have fragmented indexes. That is, each set of simples with the same initial is preceded by its own index, which consists exclusively of the articles beginning with that letter. This organization is shared by the printed Latin editions and by some of the *CI* versions in other languages.

As an alternative to these separate tables of contents distributed all throughout the work, certain *CI* copies have only one complete list from A to Z at the very beginning or at the very end of the work. Thus, some manuscripts include a chapter index: "Here begynneth the chyapitre of herbes

²⁷ In opposition to *Fachliteratur*. See J. Stannard (1982); F. Alonso-Almeida & R. Carroll (2003).

be ordor after the Alphabet” (*Sloane 404, fol. 3v*). Others attach three different kinds of auxiliary texts: tables of complexions (*alphabeti* or *tabula nominorum*, which give the Latin name of the simple plus its translation into English, and sometimes other vernacular synonyms); tables of remedies; and tables of concordances. These aiding tools appear also in some of the edited French and Dutch manuscripts, and there are a few examples among the examined Latin exemplars: there is a *De simplicibus medicinalibus cum tabula* in *Sloane 420, fols. 184a-247b*; and *Cambridge, Trinity College O.9.10, fols. 137r-140v* is a table of degrees and virtues kept separately from the treatise.

BL Add. 29301 and *Sloane 706* include all the possible forms in which the information contained in the *CI* was reorganized and distributed in its ME versions. The former begins with a *tabula nominorum* that precedes the presentation of the *CI* as an easy-to-use remedy book. This *tabula* provides the name of the simples, together with their degree of heat or moistness (fols. 55r-58v): “Argentum uiuum. Quick siluer is hote and m. in þe .i. degree” (fol. 55r). After that, there comes a table of remedies, in which the simples are followed by the diseases they cure (fols. 58v-64v): “Argentum uiuum. Ffor lysse and for scabbe” (fol. 58v).

In the case of *Sloane 706*, a table of concordances comes right after the remedies to help the reader to find quickly the simples or sicknesses in the pages where they are discussed: “A concordance of þe book aforseyd” (fols. 89v-91v). After this, there is a table of complexions: “A tabyle after þe abece of dyuers erbis and certayne gummes and some of metalles and of stonnes whos vertues in yt þai seruen to medecynes. Here þai be declarede in þe booke and here compleccions be sette here for redynes” (fols. 91v-93v). *Sloane 1764* offers a very similar structure. Its ME *CI* text is likewise followed by the concordances (fols. 113r-114v), but the table of complexions comes before the medical recipes: “Here begynneth a table after þe abece of diuerse herbes and certeyn gummes and some of metalles and of stonnes whos vertues in þat þey

seruen to medicines. Here þey ben declared in þe book followynge. And here complecions ben sette here for redynesse” (fols. 47r-49r).

These quick-reference tables sometimes served as a complement to the text from which the information provided in them had been subtracted. On those occasions, the theoretical basis was not lost, but only moved from the main text to auxiliary ones. For practical reasons, the contents were arranged in a different way. Other times, however, the extracted parts were transmitted independently. This is the case of another group of manuscripts. In them, the *CI*, reduced to tables of complexions, does not include any therapeutic information. Their text supplies no more than a very brief description of the simple, which is preceded by its Latin term, by its vernacular equivalent, and, occasionally, by other synonyms, serving thus the function of a glossary or dictionary.

The ME manuscripts belonging to this group differ from one another in the number of simples and in the formal disposition of the text on the page. According to this, they can be further divided into several subgroups. The first one²⁸ consists of *London, Wellcome Library 397, fols. 71r-86r; Glasgow, University Library, Hunter 95 (T. 4.12), fols. 158r-163v; Hunter 307 (U. 7. 1), fols. 167r-172v;* and “A Table of the Exposyssion of Names” in *Bodleian Library, Bodley 178, fols. 152r-155v*. The simples in these manuscripts are presented in lists of entries, which are arranged in two columns and separated by changes of paragraph.

The second subgroup²⁹ includes *CUL Kk. 6. 33, III, fols. 12r-12v; Sloane 71, fols. 86r-109v;* and *New York Academy of Medicine 13, fols. 189v-194v*. These manuscripts provide a linear enumeration of the simples highlighting every new entry with some textual mark, be it by means of underlining, be it by changing the ink colour, but not necessarily with a change of paragraph.

²⁸ See table, group E (1).

²⁹ See table, group E (2).

The lists in these manuscripts occupy the entire page or column width. In addition, they all coincide in form and content with the initial tables in BL Add. 29301, Sloane 706, and Sloane 1764, except for *Asbmole 1443*, pp. 87-190,³⁰ which begins in *absinthium* and not in *aloe*, and which develops further the text of some simples.

The only simple to which all these copies devote more space is, again, *aloe*. Its description, as opposed to most others, always includes the information from the Latin versions concerning complexion, place of provenance, and types, up to “the lasse bitter it is and the swetter sauoure that it hath, the better it ys” (Wellcome 397, fol. 71r). This seems to support the hypothesis that the longer text for *aloe* is an identifying strategy. The rest of the entries are as simplified as the one that follows: “Aurum is gold, most temperat of all metalles. Asa fetida is hote and drye in the first degree and yt ys the gumme of a tre. And the moore yt stinkiþ, the better yt is” (Wellcome 397, fol. 71r).

Sloane 297, fols. 14r-23v³¹ also distributed the information in the manner of lists. The ME *CI* in this exemplar was copied, read, and very much worked upon. Like some of the previously mentioned manuscripts, it consisted initially of an index from A to Z, where the names of the simples and their complexions filled the entire page width. In different ink, although in the same hand, the therapeutic properties that appear in between lines, in the margins, or wherever there was space, seem to have been added later. The manuscript text in this copy starts with a list from A to Z (fols. 14r-19r), after which we can read a few remedies based on simples that begin with the letter C (*caparus*, *comedreos*, *cuminum*). Then, the list is copied again from the very beginning, but this time in a more orderly way, producing, as a result, a table of complexions that ends in *passule* (fols. 20r-23v), and which is completed with later additions on the curative effects of the simples. This manuscript, written in an informal Secretary hand with some Anglicana features, may have

³⁰ See table, group E (3).

³¹ See table, group E (4).

been a student or a doctor's notebook. It appears to be a disorderly copy by somebody working, at the same time, with a *CI* table of complexions and a *CI* remedy book. All these annotations –written horizontally and vertically throughout the pages– give the manuscript quite an untidy aspect, which reminds us of the working drafts of someone who, while studying with the help of an outline, adds to the corresponding points the ideas that he remembers or wants to remember.

The indexes, tables, and concordances that result from the *De simplicibus medicina* bring us closer to the origin of these kinds of tools that helped the reader in the use and the study of the scientific information contained in the work. With a didactic and clarifying function, especially as far as technical terms of Greek and Latin origin were concerned, they were very much used in medical compendia as well as in all sorts of practical reference works. Like other contemporary and later compendia of the same kind, the *CI* became a very widely used scientific dictionary. The independent transmission of these complementary texts, also in different hands and formats, may have been quite common, and would have been especially helpful. The lists of synonyms played an important conciliatory role between medicine and pharmacy.³² Physicians, doctors, apothecaries, and less educated readers used them in the hope of minimizing the confusions caused by the different names by which the same simple was known. Some of these lists also served as summaries or epitomes of the *CI* theoretical basis.

3.- CONCLUSIONS

The *CI* teachings were rooted in classical medicine and in the practical doctrines of the prestigious School of Salerno. Like John of Gaddesden's *Rosa*

³² Other glossaries were: the Salernitan *Alphita*, Mirfield's *Synonyma Bartholomei* (end of 14thc.), and the *Antebalumina galieni* or *Quid pro quo*, where alternative replacements for certain simples could be found (Mackinney 1938: 260-266). For more information about the diffusion of Salernitan botany in England, see J. Stannard (1964: 357).

Anglica and other medical compendia, this treatise on simple medicines intended to reach both academic and non-academic spheres: “Gaddesden wrote his book in Latin, and directed it explicitly to surgeons and physicians, both poor and rich. This is in itself interesting. Surgery was not taught formally at Oxford or Cambridge and this suggests that Gaddesden was addressing an audience in Latin outside the formal teaching of the University” (Getz 1998: 42). By the end of the fourteenth century, the London priest John of Mirfield compiled in Latin his *Breviarium Bartholomei*, aiming at allowing “readers to medicate themselves, especially in the case of those diseases that were curable and not too serious” (Getz 1998: 51), an intention that coincides with that of the *CI* prologue in Sloane 404. If “medieval medical practice embraced men and women, serfs and free people, Christians and non-Christians, academics and tradespeople, the wealthy and the poor, the educated and those ignorant of formal learning” (1998: 5), the copies of medical works in vernacular languages must, then, have enjoyed a very wide acceptance as self-help books: not only among physicians and medical practitioners in general –who would have found the English versions useful even if they had been trained at University and knew Latin–, but also among a larger readership not necessarily expert. Indeed, the basic ability to read and write, not Latin but the vernacular, was already quite common in virtually all the social spheres in fifteenth-century England (Orme 1973, 1989; Clanchy 1993).

Apart from the obvious interest that these medico-botanical works provoked in physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, and churchmen,³³ Brodin stated: “if we may judge from the evidence in literature, it seems probable nuns and women of the upper classes were among those who used these herbals” (1950: 11). We know that the *CI* was in the hands of noblemen and noblewomen in France,³⁴

³³ For more specific references to the owners of these manuscripts, see E. Garrido-Anes (2005b) and P. M. Jones (forthcoming).

³⁴ See M. Collins (2000) and J. M. López Piñero *et al.* (2000 & 2001).

and the illuminated BL Add. 29301 codex points to the fact that that was also the case in England (Garrido-Anes 2004: 13).³⁵ Its popularity and domestic character would have made it possible for it to reach also a non-aristocratic female audience: “All women were expected to know something of family medicine, and it is noticeable that there existed various treatises on diseases of women specially written or translated for their use, with the plain assumption that they will be able to read” (Power 1975: 78). The presence in the community of a single person able to read English would have allowed even the *illiterati* to become familiar with these translations by means of oral transmission. The prologues of romances and of all other sorts of popular works in prose and verse often encouraged oral delivery with the real or rhetorical purpose of reaching and instructing the poor and the uneducated. This happened also with works that dealt with science and medicine: “[Because] women of our tongue do better read and understand this language than any other, and every women lettered read it to other unlettered and help them and counsel them in their maladies withouten showing their disease to man, I have this drawn and written in English” (Power 1975: 788).³⁶ We cannot assess the exact extent to which these exhortations -like that in prologue of the ME *CI* in Sloane 404- to reach the poor and the least instructed men and women were actually put in practice. It is nonetheless possible to confirm that the chances for this to take place increased with vernacularization. As it had already happened with Wyclif’s translation of the Bible, “maad that alle puples schulden knowe it” (Forshall & Madden 1850: 56), early translators “expressed misgivings about bringing physic to the wider audience that a vernacular readership implied. But they also expressed the belief that learned medicine itself would be helpful to a large number of people” (Getz 1990: 8-9).

³⁵ In this manuscript, we can read that “þe Countesse of Hennawd [...] che send þe copy to here douter (Philippa) qwen of England” (fol. 94r).

³⁶ See this prologue to the ME translation of the text attributed to Trotula (“The Knowing of Woman’s Kind in Childing”), in J. Wogan-Browne & al. (1999: 157-159).

It seems, then, that the functions performed by the *CI* manuscripts in England were not completely disconnected from the *docere*, *movere* and *delectare* associated with medieval rhetoric. We can speak of *docere*, because of their clear didactic purpose concerning the healing properties of the simples. The *CI* and other translated medical works had, as expressed by the fourteenth-century Dominican Henry Daniel, a benevolent and charitable intention: “the more openly taught something is, the more people will take it seriously.’ English, for Daniel and for other vernacular translators, was not only a tool for teaching and openness, but also a rhetorical aid to persuade the reader of the usefulness of this type of medicine” (Getz 1998: 86). This persuasive function (*movere*) is also present in the *CI* manuscripts that contain remedies to alleviate and heal, in which imperative formulas and efficacy phrases were often used to convince the reader of the benefit of the simples.³⁷ Finally, *delectare*, though obviously not intended by Platearius or by any of the early compilers, became a purpose that many later decorated and illuminated manuscripts of the *CI* aimed to achieve. They were authentic works of art that caught the noblemen’s attention at court, and that have continued to please everyone who looks at them.³⁸

On its long journey from Salerno to England and other parts of the Continent, the extraordinarily dynamic character of the diffusion of the *Liber de simplicibus medicina* – with its different forms and uses – shows its recipients’ active implication during the whole course of its transmission. Judging from

³⁷ Some examples are: “[Filipendula] it is a souerayne medicine” (CUL, Ee.1.13, fol. 41v); “A suppositorie mad of klen sal gemme worchiþ wonderlich” (fol. 86r).

³⁸ As stated by K. M. Reeds (1991: 145), it was not very likely to find university teachers or students owning or working with illustrated botanical treatises. On the one hand, because most of the plant drawings included, which had earlier appeared with a didactic purpose, progressively turned into decorative items of little or no help at all for plant identification. On the other hand, because the *pecia* system of massive transmission of books made it impossible and extremely costly to include many illuminated capitals and illustrations. Only bibliophiles from the upper classes would have been able to afford such exemplars, which they kept as works of art. For the description of some illustrated and illuminated *CI* manuscripts in languages other than English, see M. Collins (2000).

the many and varied exemplars preserved, its popularity in England was not at all inferior to that attained in other places. An overview of all its known ME texts shows how their different forms did indeed contribute to perpetuate, complete, condense and transmit Platearius's *CI*. Given the simplicity with which contents were explained and organized, the ME *CI* texts, with their ability to summarize the most important information, certainly complied with all the requisites to be regarded as excellent manuals of their time. The English *CI* also exerted a direct or indirect influence upon other contemporary compilations like a small medical book preserved in London, BL, Sloane 3866, which "conflated excerpts from the Middle English Macer that was edited by Gösta Frisk in 1949, and a version of the unedited vernacular translation of *Circa instans*." (See G. R. Keiser 1996: 37).

The Salernitan *CI* was born in the south of what today constitutes the Italian peninsula. Aided by the for a long time uninterrupted labour of translators, copyists and readers, this work succeeded in expanding its influence over a wide geographical area throughout which it kept on changing and taking up different shapes over the course of the centuries. The ME *CI* books were found not only in practical octavo or quarto volumes, which could be easily carried as *vade mecum*, but also in larger formats to be used on desks. Similarly, they were written in both Anglicana and Secretary hands, which allowed for speed and ease of writing and which were used for cheaper books, as well as in more calligraphic and elaborate Textura scripts for more costly exemplars (see M. B. Parkes 1969). As the work drew material from further sources, and as it kept being copied for one purpose or another, the *Liber de simplici medicina* – sometimes with a clear functional intention, sometimes with a more decorative and artistic character – adopted a great variety of forms and sizes. This, however, did not erase the trace of its origin, and thus, we are still able to find a clear bond among all the texts here referred, and can certainly call them the heirs of Platearius's *CI*.

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4. TABLE OF MANUSCRIPTS

Translation 1	Translation 2	Translation 3	Type	Group	
Sloane 105, fols. 66r-100v.	Gonville and Caius 609/340, fols. 20r-45v	Sloane 404, fols. 2r-243r; 294r-319v.	Treatise/ Manual	A	
Egerton 2433, fols. 49r-54v.					
Sloane 770, fols. 45v-48v.					
Ripon Cathedral XVIII. H. 1 [2] fol. H6r-H6v.					
Sloane 706, fols. 21r-89v.			Remedy book	B	
Sloane 1764, fols. 49r-112v.					
Cambridge, Jesus College, Q.D.1, fols. 75v-121r.					
Cambridge, Trinity Coll. R. 14. 32, fols. 128r-129v, 8r, 8v, 10v, 11r, 18r, 18v, 19r, 28r, 61r-64r.					
CUL Ec. 1.13, fols. 1-91v					
Ashmole 1477, fols. 114r-195v.					
Wellcome, Med. Soc. 131, fols. 3r-56v.					
BL Add. 29301, fols. 64vb-89r.					
Sloane 635, fols. 35r-69v.					
Sloane 1088, fols. 1a-60b.					
Ashmole 1481, fols. 64r-83v; 44r-49r; 54r-63v.			B ó C		
Sloane 297, fols. 72r-78v.					
Wellcome 397, fols. 71r-86r				D	
Hunter 95, T.4-12, fols. 158r-163v.			Tables	E	
Hunter 307, U.7.1, fols. 167r-172v.					
Bodley 178, fols. 152r-155v.					
BL Add. 29.301, fols. 55r-58va; 58vb-64vb.					
Sloane 706, fols. 89v-91v; 91v-93v.				F	
Sloane 1764, fols. 47r-49r; 113r-114v.					
CUL Kk.6.33, III, fols. 12r-12v.					
Sloane 71, fols. 86r-109v.					
New York Academy of Medicine 13, fols. 189v-194v.					
Ashmole 1443, pp. 87-190.					
Sloane 297, fols. 14r-23v.					
					G
					H

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