

# **Authority in early English medical writing**

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# Medicine in the Middle Ages

- Formal medical education in European universities began in the 12<sup>th</sup> century
- 13<sup>th</sup> century in England (Oxford; Cambridge), 15<sup>th</sup> century in Scotland (St. Andrews; Aberdeen)
- Heavy emphasis on the Arts & Greek philosophy

-> “A Rational and Learned Doctor” (French 2003)

# Scholastic worldview

- Scholasticism
  - Philosophy & theology taught in medieval universities
  - Emphasis on tradition, dogmatic texts
  - Authority of the written word cf. The Bible
- Study of key authorities
  - Greek and Arabic authors & early Christian writers
- Scholastic medicine
  - Medical authorities: Hippocrates, Galen, Ibn-Sīnā (Avicenna)
  - Humoral theory & maintenance of health

# Early modern medicine

- Challenging old views & authorities
  - New diseases
  - Renaissance, fixing the mistakes of the Middle Ages
- New guilds & institutions:
  - 1518 Royal College of Physicians
  - 1540 Company of Barber-Surgeons
  - 1660 Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge

# Empirical worldview

- Knowledge based on observation and experience
- Measurable experiments, mathematical models
- New sources of knowledge
  - Information can come from anywhere
  - ... in practice still from middle & upper-class men
  - But challenged old institutions
- Empirical medicine
  - No unified theory

# Continuing trends

- Scholasticism & university education
- Everyday practice of medicine remained basically the same
- Difference between scholastic vs. empirical medicine mainly a question of argumentation style

# Scholastic

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# Empirical

- Detailed references to past authorities
- Comparing and reconciling differing views
- Emphasis on education

- Observations
- Reports of experiments
- Subjective
- Emphasis on experience

# English medical writing

- Latin the official language of science in Europe
- Vernacular used for specific reasons
  - Reaching new audiences (lay people & non-university educated practitioners)
  - Educating the public (act of Christian charity)
  - Nationalistic feelings
  - Author not fluent in Latin themselves
- From highly technical texts written for other professionals to popular medical books

# *Corpus of Early English Medical Writing*

- *Middle English Medical Texts (MEMT) c.1375 – 1500*
  - Published in 2005
  - About 500,000 words
- *Early Modern English Medical Texts (EMEMT) 1500 – 1700*
  - Published in 2010
  - About 2 million words

# My research questions

1. How did ideological changes affect the evidential features of English medical writing and were some genres more innovative than others?
2. What pragmatic functions did references to authorities serve in different stages and genres of medical writing?
3. What effect did differing ideologies have on how and how frequently medical writers refer to their own authority?

# Methods

- Scholastic and empirical argumentations styles:
  - Communication verbs (e.g. SAY, WRITE, AFFIRM, TEACH)
  - Mental verbs (e.g. THINK, UNDERSTAND, BELIEVE)
- Both references to other authors (3<sup>rd</sup> person) and the writer's own authority (1<sup>st</sup> person)

# 3<sup>rd</sup> person references

- Who they refer to, e.g.:
  - Ancient Greek/Roman authorities
  - Medieval Islamic writers
  - 17<sup>th</sup> century English doctors
  - Biblical figures
- Tone
  - Affirming
  - Critical
  - Neutral

# 3<sup>rd</sup> person: Affirming

1665 Drage William *Daimonomageia*

Reference: Henry More (17th century English doctor)

**Doctor More, lib. 3. cap. 2. of his Antidote against Atheisme, saith**, That Mistris Dark of Westminster told him, that her Husband very well went through some Streets in London, and was strook on the thigh with an invisible hand [.]

Laurentius Andreas *Preservation of Sight* 1599

Reference: Hippocrates (Ancient Greek)

There is **an excellent sentence in Hippocrates**, in the end of his first book of diet, which deserueth to be written in letters of gold. Our soule **(saith he)** cannot be changed in his essence[.]

## 3<sup>rd</sup> person: Critical

1562 Turner William *Booke of Bathes*

Reference: Leonhardus Fuchius (16th century Dutch)

**Fuchsius sayeth**/ that there is som brimstone in it/ **but nether he nether anye other wryter that I can redeof/ sheweth** anye other miner or matter whyche gyueth thys soure taste in to the water.

1700 Tuvry Daniel *Treatise of Medicines*

Reference: Galen (Ancient Greek)

Without their Instruction, **says Galen**, who could have divin'd that Jasper stops Bleeding, and the Ashes of Crabs cure Madness? **But I shall endeavour to make it appear**, that tho' the Vertues of some Specificks were only discover'd by these means, yet all are not subject to the same Fate[.]

# 3<sup>rd</sup> person: Neutral

1670 Harvey Gideon *Little Venus Unmask'd*

Reference: Paracelsus (15th century German)

**Fi\_ravan\_i** denies that the Spaniards brought it from the West Indies, but **affirms**, the French being almost fami\_h'd, first got the Pox, at the fore-said siege of Naples, by eating dead Men's Carkasses, which he further makes proof of, by feeding a Sow with Sows flesh, likewise an Owl and a Whelp with flesh of their own kind, which he found afterwards markt with spots, botches, and pimples, like those of the Pox. **Paracelsus saith**, this Disease was bred between a French Leper, and a Neap\_\_tan Whore, whilst she had her courses upon her. **Astrologers write**, the Pox was caused by an unlucky meeting of some of the Planets: though **others again say**, it was caused by Greek Wine, dash'd with Lepers blood, which the French drank, being purposely left for them at Sum\_ by the Sp\_nia\_d\_. **Some report** a Leper of Valentia in S\_ain first gave a noble Whore this disease, who since dispersed it among many others.

**Divines impute** the rise of it to Gods Judgment upon Adulterers and Fornicators.

1<sup>st</sup> person

- Metatext?
- Justification
  - Education / Past
  - Observation / Experience

# 1<sup>st</sup> person: Education/past

1545 Langton Christopher *Introduction Into Phisycke*

Althogh that su~me thynke the harte to be the well, and original sprynge of blood, notwythstandyng **I had rather saye as Galene sayeth**, that it is the fleshe of the liuer, which engendreth blood[.]

1566 Jones John *Dial for All Agves*

The Astrologians addeth to the procreation of these plages recited, the influence of certain starres endusing the plage, yea and the times therof shorter or longer to reigne, **againste the whych with Agricola, I saye** it pleaseth vs not to inuay, y=e= Deuines sayeth, the punishment of God for oure offences[.]

# 1<sup>st</sup> person: Observation/experience

1685 Lamport John *Small-pox*

But of this I have given a larger account in another Treatise, which I hope shortly to publish. **I will say no more of Vomits in this place,** having in the aforesaid book shewed almost a Universal use of them, and **proved it by undeniable Experiments.**

1671 Blagrove Joseph *Astrological Practice of Physics*

**For I my self have oft times recovered my Patient** having out lived the first mortal time as aforesaid, but **I must needs say** such changes and chances **are seldom seen**, for where one doth escape many dieth for the stars are God's Messengers, and what they do foreshew, do assuredly without miracle come to pass. Concerning the way and manner how to cure each distemper, I have shewed elsewhere.

# Analysis

- Genres of medical writing
  - e.g. surgical books vs. health guides; textbooks vs. scientific articles
- Time period
  - MEMT (1375-1500)
  - 1500-1549
  - 1550-1600
  - 1600-1649
  - 1650-1700

# Metatext: authoritative or not?

1682 Talbor Robert *English Remedy*

He was guilty of a no smaller fault, in forcing, **if I may say so**, his Patients to drink Wine, and to eat solid Food during the whole time of continued Feavers[.]

1615 C.T. *How to Plant Tobacco in England*

To the end therefore, **as I haue already said**, that the treasures exchanged for Tobacco, may be kept within the Land; that those that delight therein may haue it at a better rate, and to auoyd the danger of the Spanish mixtures[.]

# Question to the audience

How to analyse the functions of metatext?

- Should metatext be annotated? Why?