“GENTYLL READER YE SHALL UNDERSTANDE”: PRACTICAL BOOKS AND
THE MAKING OF AN ENGLISH READING PUBLIC, 1400–1600

By

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and approved by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“Gentyll reader ye shall understande”: Practical books and the making of an English reading public, 1400–1600”

by MELISSA BUCKNER REYNOLDS

Dissertation Director:
Alastair Bellany

This dissertation examines the composition, use, and reuse of practical manuscripts and early printed practical books in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England. I locate the origins of an English “reading public” in the everyday interactions men and women had with late medieval almanacs, prognostications, and collections of craft, medical, and agricultural knowledge. I argue that from around 1400, non-elite English men and women became accustomed to interacting with the written word thanks to the proliferation of these utilitarian manuscripts. These pragmatic texts remained largely unchanged and immensely popular well into the sixteenth-century, transferring easily into print. Drawing from the methodologies of the history of the book, I compare 120 practical manuscripts with over 180 editions of printed practical books. This comparison reveals how incremental changes to the presentation and circulation of mundane knowledge transformed how English people saw themselves as readers, writers, and consumers of knowledge. Thus, this study contributes to a narrative that posits the printing press as an agent of change, even as it also reveals the continuity of everyday
concerns that structured English life over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a period of seismic social, political, religious, and cultural change.

Chapter one offers a brief synthesis of scholarship on manuscript culture in England prior to 1400, as well as a survey of patterns of book ownership, literacy, and manuscript production in fifteenth-century England. Chapter two explores how late medieval readers interpreted icons and symbols in manuscript almanacs comprised almost wholly of pictures, and then examines how and why this visual language collapsed in a culture in print. Chapter three asks how readers understood the collection of useful knowledge in manuscript, and then follows the commercialization of this same practical knowledge in print. I argue that printers’ marketing techniques convinced readers of the novelty of centuries-old recipes, thereby encouraging them to search for new knowledge in the world. Finally, chapter four demonstrates that the margins of medieval practical manuscripts were ideal locations for early modern writers to experiment with informal scribal practices. I locate the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century men and women who left signatures, records, and bits of correspondence in their practical manuscripts and argue that these reader marks illustrate how the non-elite became accustomed to wielding the pen, and with it, the authority of the written word.

Through the study of everyday habits of reading, writing, and collecting knowledge, this dissertation contributes to scholarly debates on the Reformation, the rise of the New Sciences, and the growth of the public sphere. It offers a timely early modern perspective on a question roiling our present-day politics: how is a society transformed when its citizens access the same old information in entirely new ways?
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For financial support while researching and writing this dissertation, I am grateful to the American Council of Learned Societies and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Medieval Academy of America and the Richard III Society, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and the Rutgers School of Graduate Studies and School of Arts and Sciences. My sincerest thanks also go to the numerous librarians and archivists behind retrieval desks at the British Library, Bodleian Library, Wellcome Library, Cambridge University Library, Trinity College Cambridge Library, Houghton Library, Folger Shakespeare Library, and the National Archives at Kew. Portions of chapter three are forthcoming in the Journal of British Studies, and I thank its editors and anonymous reviewers for careful reading and insightful suggestions for revisions.

A number of fine historians have shaped my thinking, and with it, the contours of this project. Daniel Riches and James Mixson nurtured my scholarly ambition and encouraged me to pursue a PhD. Belinda Davis, Jennifer Jones, Temma Kaplan, and Leah DeVun challenged my thinking and improved my writing. Thanks to Pamela Smith for bringing me in to the world of Making and Knowing, and to Keith Wrightson and James Siemon for their guidance at the Folger. I remain grateful to Ann Blair for her meticulous reading of every chapter draft, and for her enthusiasm that buoyed me along the path to completion. Without James Masschaele’s rigorous paleography training I could not have conceived of this project; for that and for his unflagging support I am thankful. Finally, my sincerest thanks must go to my advisor, Alastair Bellany. He has sent innumerable letters of recommendation, responded to hundreds of emails, and as far as I can tell, holds the record for fastest turnaround time for a chapter (same day, within a
few hours). His insights and comments have improved this dissertation tremendously, and it has been a pleasure to be his student.

I cannot imagine completing this dissertation without the help of friends who offered conversation and commiseration along the way: my cohort at Rutgers, but especially Hannah Frydman and Lauren Swift; my colleagues at the Medieval Academy of America; fellow translators on the *Making and Knowing Project*; and my crew in DC, Jennifer Braddock, Kat Kempe, Merissa Khurma, Paris Martin, and Kathryn Roos.

My in-laws, Richard and Sharon Reynolds, and parents, Frank and Diane Buckner, lovingly cared for my children every time I jaunted off to read manuscripts. It takes a village, and they were mine. Beyond their love and support, my parents modeled throughout my childhood what it meant to be a teacher. I spent countless hours in my mother’s classroom and my father’s collegiate office where I witnessed their dedication and care for their students. I hope to live up to their examples.

My two children, Hansen and Lucy, have grown from infancy to elementary age over the course of my graduate training. They have kept me balanced and busy, and their love and curiosity about “my book” was the best antidote to writing doldrums. I thank them for their patience and for their unconditional love. The teachers and babysitters who cared for them while I worked also deserve my thanks.

Finally, my husband Justin Reynolds has shown his love in countless ways throughout the writing of this dissertation, but I am most grateful for his unwavering support of my dreams and ambition. He has always believed in me and cheered me on, even when I had my doubts. This dissertation is dedicated to him.
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TRANSCRIPTION PROTOCOLS AND EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES

Original spellings and typography have been retained in all transcriptions of manuscripts and in all quotations from early printed sources, including distinctions between u/v and i/j. I have expanded abbreviations according to common practice with expansions represented by italicized letters.

For transcriptions of manuscripts, \ / indicate words or letters inserted by the scribe and [ ] indicate my reconstructions of difficult or illegible text. Ellipses between these symbols indicate letters that I cannot identify.

I have used original spellings in all early printed titles, but when multiple editions of the same text are examined, I have adopted a single short title for the work. I have included the Short Title Catalogue number for all cited editions of early printed works within the footnotes and have included all referenced editions with original titles in the bibliography.
# Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bodleian</td>
<td>Bodleian Library, Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUL</td>
<td>Cambridge University Library, Cambridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRO</td>
<td>Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Derbyshire</td>
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<tr>
<td>EEBO</td>
<td><em>Early English Books Online</em>. eebo.chadwyck.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>University of Glasgow Library, Glasgow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCA</td>
<td>Sheffield City Archives, Sheffield</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCC</td>
<td>Trinity College Cambridge Library, Cambridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNA</td>
<td>The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew</td>
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<td>Wellcome</td>
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INTRODUCTION

“And seinge that the people at thys presente are dayly more inventive, & enclined also to reade & to have understandynge in artes and sciences, as some which do folowe polletycke and cyvell matters, do applie themselves to understand the lawes of Cities, and Regions, and of such thynges as apperteyne unto the feates of war. Other there be which give them selves to read the holly scriptures according to the understandynge of holy Church, to thende that thereby they maye be stirred and brought to lyve more vertuously: […] other ther bee whyche are desirous to reade Histories & Poesies, and some have affection to read bookes of Astrologye, & to have knowledge of the celestiall constellacions, & movements.”

–Humfrey Baker, *The rules and righte ample documentes touching the use and practice of the common almanackes, 1558*¹

Sometime between July of 1557 and July of 1558, the first year following the incorporation of the Company of Stationers in England, the printer Thomas Marshe paid four shillings for the rights to print an English translation of Oronce Finé’s popular instruction manual, *Les canons & documents tres amples, touchant l’usage & pratique des communs almanachz, que l’on nomme ephemerides*. Finé was chair of mathematics at the Collège Royal in Paris, a renowned scholar who produced popular volumes on astrology, geometry, cartography, and other sciences over the course of his career. His little manual for interpreting almanacs was one such popular volume, first printed in Paris in 1543, and again in 1551, 1556, and 1557. For the English edition of Finé’s work, titled *The rules and righte ample documentes, touchinge the vse and practice of the common almanackes*, Marshe relied on the translation services of Humfrey Baker. In addition to translating Finé’s original work into English, Baker was also responsible for penning the book’s epistolary dedication “to the lovyng Reader,” from which the quotation above

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¹ Oronce Finé, *The rules and righte ample documentes, touchinge the vse and practise of the common almanackes, which are named ephemerides*, STC 10878.7, Folger Shakespeare Library (London: Thomas Marshe, 1558), sig. A.ii b–A.iii b.
was excerpted. In contrast to Finé’s French edition which began with an obsequious
dedication to André Blondet, royal treasurer under François I, Baker dedicated his
English edition not to a single wealthy patron but rather to the whole of the English
reading public, “inventive, & enclin ed also to reade & to have understandynge”—those
gentle readers whose tastes and appetites drove the increasingly profitable printing
industry of which Baker was a part.²

Humfrey Baker was not the only author to remark on the influence of printed
books in early modern England or to speak of the relationship between readers and
popular texts. By the mid-sixteenth century, English men and women were very much
aware of the impact of the press and the proliferation of printed material. John Foxe
wrote in the first edition of his Acts and Monuments, published in 1563, that “the worlde
is so replenished with suche an infinite multitude of books, dayly put foorth every where
[…] so that bookes maye rather seme to lacke readers, then readers to lacke bookes.”³
Like Baker who emphasized the erudition of English readers, so too Foxe commented on
“how learned this age of ours was” and accepted that “the secrete and close iudgementes
of the readers would determine” the reception and reputation of his work.⁴ For both of
these authors, the technological advancement of the mechanical hand press with its
ability to produce “suche a multitude of books” was noteworthy, but what struck each
was not simply the abundance of printed material available on the market, but rather the

² Oronce Finé, Les canons & documents très amples touchant l’usage & practique des
communs almanachz que l’on nomme éphémérides, Gallica, Bibliothèque nationale de
³ John Foxe, The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO, 1563 edition
⁴ Foxe, 14.
growing influence of the people who read, commented upon, and passed judgement on that multitude.

Who were these “inventive” English readers? According to Baker they were men and women who turned to books to engage with all the hot-button issues of the day. There were those who “folowe polletycke and cyvell matters,” others who “read the holly scriptures,” and of course, there were readers for whom Baker must have intended his work on almanacs, who “read bookes of Astrologye […] to have knowledge of the celestiall constellacions, & movements.” In this brief itemized description of English readers, Baker references cultural themes that have come to define sixteenth-century English culture: those who read “holly scriptures” surely felt the effects of the Reformation; those reflecting on “polletycke and cyvyll matters” must have recognized the bureaucratic expansion of Tudor government; and those interested in “celestiall constellations, & movements” represent a growing interest in observing the natural world. For Baker and these readers living through the “print revolution,” these cultural transformations were experienced, at least in part, through the pages of books. Those “inventive & enclined also to read” were better able to understand their shifting world.

Baker’s and Foxe’s emphasis on readers would not surprise modern book historians. Indeed, over the last three decades, a whole field of inquiry led by Robert Darnton, Roger Chartier, Anthony Grafton, William Sherman, and Ann Blair, among others, has grown up around readers, reading practices, and reading communities or cultures. Much of this emphasis on local, personal, and contextualized experiences of

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5 See, for example, Robert Darnton, “First Steps Toward a History of Reading,” in The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 154–87; Roger Chartier, The Cultural Origins of the French
print technology evolved in response to the “print revolution” thesis of Elizabeth Eisenstein, first posited in 1979/80 in The Printing Press as an Agent of Change.\(^6\) Whereas Eisenstein argued that particular qualities inherent to printed texts—textual standardization, large scale reproducibility, and stability, fixity, and trustworthiness—served as the foundation for pan-European cultural watersheds like the Reformation or Scientific Revolution, critics have shown that print could only be as “revolutionary” as the men and women who produced and consumed it.\(^7\) Eisenstein’s work has rightly been criticized for its totalizing methodology and its technological determinism, and her “revolution” has been replaced with “evolution.”\(^8\)


The pendulum has swung too far in the other direction, however, generating two interconnected problems for histories of the coming of the press: the first, evidentiary, and the second, historiographical. First, most of the work generated by Eisenstein’s thesis has centered on the printed book, with very little attention paid to the manuscript culture she used as a foil to explain her revolution. We now understand that print was not the stable, regularized, and always-trustworthy medium of Eisenstein’s thesis. Yet we have little to compare it with. Further, in pushing back against her more strident characterizations of “print culture,” historians have inadvertently created the false impression that there was little difference between the presentation, production, circulation, and reception of knowledge in a manuscript-centered culture as compared to that in a print-centered culture. It may be true that Eisenstein’s formulation of the monolithic and transformative power of “print culture” crumbles when held up to close analysis of printed sources, but it may also be true that a closer analysis of manuscript sources will reveal that the introduction of the press did indeed produce a host of effects. Yet such a view is only possible when manuscript and print are considered in equal measure.

The cultural transformations set in motion by the coming of the press took decades to be fully realized, but by 1558 and 1563, when Baker and Foxe composed their dedications to England’s readers, the English had come to recognize that they were experiencing something akin to a “print revolution.” Historians of early print would do well to heed their experiences, not in generalizations about the “revolutionary” power of

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As Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen succinctly put it: “by replacing Elizabeth Eisenstein’s revolutionary model with an evolutionary one, we have pasted over much of the uniqueness of the hand-copied codex.” Johnston and Van Dussen, 5–6.
the abstract “qualities” of the printed text, but rather through close and careful
comparison of the sources, both prior to and following the introduction of the press.10
Ideally, such a study would center on a group of texts that proliferated and circulated
widely in both manuscript and print, and that remained influential over a considerable
period before and after the advent of the press. Better still if the sources analyzed could
reveal something about the daily habits, interests, wants, and needs of readers beyond the
most educated and elite.

Enter the practical book. Practical manuscripts, or collections of useful knowledge
that might include almanacs, prognostications, medical and craft recipes, culinary texts,
or agricultural and animal husbandry treatises, first began to circulate in the vernacular
among English readers around the turn of the fifteenth century. The English recipes and
instructions compiled in these manuscripts were often translations of older Latin texts,
but in the fifteenth century they were for the first time accessible in English. Throughout
the fifteenth century, professional scribes and amateur writers alike compiled these
practical texts in manuscripts. The existence of scores of these manuscripts illustrates the
extent to which late medieval English people were appreciative of the utility of the
written word within their day to day lives well before the coming of the press. After
1476, when the printing press was brought to England, printers eagerly coopted these
mostly anonymous instructional texts for reproduction in print. Because these practical
texts were neither religious nor political, they weathered the upheavals of the early to
mid-sixteenth century, making them ideal sources for a deep study of how English

10 Indeed, this was the remedy first suggested by Anthony Grafton in his review of
Eisenstein’s thesis: “Review: The Importance of Being Printed.”
readers responded to the coming of the press and how the coming of the press eventually transformed English readers. Through close analysis of practical texts that instruct on how to fish or cure a fever or mend a shirt or make a sauce, this dissertation proposes to revisit the big questions first raised by Eisenstein through comparison of mundane texts and their readers. Indeed, I will argue that the most transformative effects of the coming of the press can only become visible when we interrogate how readers interacted with books at the level of the everyday.

I. Historiography

Among historians of early modern England, the sort of broad comparison of texts and readers that I advocate in this dissertation, encompassing both late medieval and early modern sources, is something of a rarity. ¹¹ This is not to say, however, that historians of early modern England have neglected to study the history of the book, readers and reading practice, or the impact of the press. Rather, it is just that the history of reading practice and print circulation in sixteenth-century England has been deeply intertwined with histories of English Protestantism after the Reformation.

Though causal links between rising literacy rates and the success of the Reformation are as old as the Whig histories of the nineteenth century, the quantitative turn of the mid-twentieth century furnished the data and statistics to corroborate these narratives. In the 1970s and 1980s, social historians David Cressy and Thomas Laqueur produced studies of literacy rates and their social effect on a stratifying culture, and Keith

Wrightson and David Levine’s micro-history of the English village of Terling definitively linked rising literacy among the middle classes with the adoption of Puritanism. Margaret Spufford’s article on “First Steps in Literacy” led to an upward revision in estimates of literacy rates as historians became aware that the conventions of early modern education meant that countless men and women likely had the ability to read but lacked the ability to write.

These studies provided the next generation of historians with the necessary data to make non-elite reading a critical component in the study of English Protestantism, but they also tended to perpetuate a problematic model of a starkly divided English culture. According to much of this scholarship, those who could read adopted Protestantism and other elements of early “modern” culture, whereas those who could not were stuck within a traditional “oral” culture leftover from the Middle Ages. Within the last two decades, however, this overly simplistic picture of early modern English culture has broken down. Adam Fox’s study of *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700*, conclusively demonstrated that there was no such thing as a purely oral early modern culture as even the illiterate of England lived in a society permeated by the written word. The general consensus now among early modern English historians is that a large (and increasing)

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percentage of English men and women had enough of an ability to read to be able to engage with the pamphlets and broadsides papering the walls of their homes, alehouses, and churches.¹⁵

Because historians now feel comfortable asserting that much of the English population in the sixteenth century could have been influenced by the written word, the past two decades have seen an explosion in studies linking print, literacy, and reading and writing habits with watershed events in early modern English history. Reformation historians Tessa Watt, Alexandra Walsham, and Peter Lake have all examined sixteenth-century printed materials to trace the process by which the popular classes adopted elements of Protestant theology.¹⁶ Studies of print and “godly” reading practices by Ian Green, Andrew Cambers, and Ann Hughes have reaffirmed the important role that print played in the rise of Puritanism in the later decades of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth.¹⁷

In keeping with “constructivist” methodologies now dominant in the history of science, book historians have underscored the fragility of scientific knowledge in early modern England by highlighting the role that printers played in its transmission. Adrian

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Johns demonstrated how the authority of scientific knowledge was often contingent on
the somewhat precarious social status of London printers, and Deborah Harkness has
emphasized how reading, writing, note-taking, and the collating of various bits of
scientific information were equally as important to early modern scientific practice as
was experimentation itself.\textsuperscript{18} Studies of early experimentation and anatomical discovery
by Steven Shapin and Sachiko Kusukawa emphasize the important role that printed
illustration played in the validation of new scientific knowledge.\textsuperscript{19}

Finally, historians have shown how an expanding political culture was shaped by
new media and new habits of reading and writing. Kevin Sharpe’s exploration of Tudor
propaganda revealed how media-savvy monarchs created a dialectical relationship with
their subjects through projections of their power in coinage, portraiture and engravings,
and in treatises and proclamations.\textsuperscript{20} Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton’s path-breaking
article on “How Gabriel Harvey Read his Livy,” William Sherman’s study of the
Elizabethan polymath John Dee, and Noah Millstone’s recent “Seeing like a Statesman in
Early Stuart England,” have all revealed that in Elizabethan England, reading was a
consciously political act.\textsuperscript{21} Peter Lake has gone so far as to put the origins of the “public

\textsuperscript{18} Johns, The Nature of the Book; Deborah E. Harkness, The Jewel House: Elizabethan
London and the Scientific Revolution (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008),
\textsuperscript{19} Steven Shapin, Never Pure: Historical Studies of Science as If It Was Produced by
People with Bodies, Situated in Time, Space, Culture, and Society, and Struggling for
Credibility and Authority (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 89–116;
Sachiko Kusukawa, Picturing the Book of Nature: Image, Text, and Argument in
Sixteenth-Century Human Anatomy and Medical Botany, First Edition edition (Chicago ;
\textsuperscript{20} Kevin Sharpe, Selling the Tudor Monarchy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009),
\textsuperscript{21} Jardine and Grafton, “Studied for Action”; Sherman, John Dee; Noah Millstone,
Manuscript Circulation and the Invention of Politics in Early Stuart England, Cambridge
sphere” in Elizabethan England, linking its development to an increase in the practice of “politicking” by dueling religious factions through the circulation of letters, pamphlets, broadsides, ballads, and libels.²²

Each of these studies relating to the Reformation, Scientific Revolution, and public sphere presupposes an active and engaged body of readers whose responses, reactions, and attitudes to written media shaped the development of early modern English religious, scientific, intellectual, and political culture. Yet, there has been little attempt to understand how those readers and their culture of literate engagement came to be. Rarely do these historians of early modern England examine sources from before 1530, let alone 1500. For example, in Literacy and the Social Order, David Cressy’s quantitative treatment of the growth of English literacy, the Succession Oath of 1534 is the earliest evidence given for baseline literacy rates in England, and statistics are only given for years after 1560.²³ Thomas Laqueur used the increasing size of print runs over the course of the sixteenth-century as evidence for an increase in English literacy in “The Cultural Origins of Popular Literacy in England, 1500–1850,” but the earliest figure he cites is from 1521.²⁴

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Of course, this neglect of the fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century archive is in part due to the fact that sources are simply much more plentiful after 1530. The Reformation set in motion a host of clerical practices that have proven to be a boon for historians of early modern England. The growth of the apparatus of the English state over the course of the sixteenth-century left a trail of state papers that provide deeper insight into the interactions between the Crown and the governed.25 Rising literacy rates meant that English men and women were able to write to one another more frequently. Their letters, more informal than those of the fifteenth century, provide yet another glimpse into the daily lives and practices of sixteenth-century English people.26 From the 1580s, manuscript “publication” became ever more common among the educated classes in England, who circulated literature, political tracts, libels, ballads, and news among friends, family, and networks of acquaintances.27

In addition, a substantial increase in print production from the mid-sixteenth-century onward has left yet another rich archive for historians—one that is for obvious reasons unmatched in the fifteenth-century archive. Finally, comparing books from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is difficult not just because new sources emerged in the sixteenth century, but because many genres popular in the fifteenth century did not carry forward into post-Reformation England. Religious writing in Books of Hours, popular prayers and devotions, or narratives of the lives of the saints—genres immensely popular in fifteenth-century England—disappear from publication records after 1540 or so.

Yet there is still a deeper historiographical reason for neglect of the fifteenth century: almost from the moment of the Reformation itself, English historians began to propagate a narrative that the English people experienced a sharp rupture in their culture at the mid-sixteenth century. According to these “Whig histories” of the Reformation, what came before was medieval, Catholic, other; after Reformation, the English people awakened to reason and eventually, to modernity. Revisionists like Eamon Duffy and Christopher Haigh have done their best to overturn these old narratives, but they have gone too far in the other direction.²⁸ The new narratives they offer too heavily emphasize collapse or stasis and fail to account for real and recognizable shifts in sixteenth-century English culture.²⁹ Make no mistake, England in 1600 was a very different place than it

²⁹ Christopher Haigh gives the most famous line to sum up the revisionist take on the Reformation: “While politicians were having their hesitant Reformations, while Protestants were preaching their evangelical reform, parish congregations went to church: they prayed again to their God, learned again how to be good, and went off home once more. That was how it had been in 1530; that was how it was in 1590. Some
was in 1400. To argue otherwise is to turn a blind eye to a host of social and cultural changes that reshaped England over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These cultural shifts cannot be attributed to any one factor—even if that factor is as influential as print technology—but these changes can be better understood through extended analysis of shifts within media circulation, knowledge transmission, and reader response.

II. Periodization, sources, and methodologies

This dissertation covers two centuries of book history, moving across the arbitrary divide between medieval and early modern England as if it were immaterial (which, to those born in 1475, it was). Over the course of these two centuries, England experienced the Reformation, the emergence of a new worldview tied to observation, exploration, and experimentation, and the growth of a bureaucratic state and a corresponding nascent public sphere. In 1400, the English were just awakening to the power and utility of the written word, drawing from a wealth of texts newly accessible in the vernacular to create books from materials, like paper, that were cheaper than ever before. In 1476, William Caxton brought the press to England and began turning out printed books not so dissimilar from manuscripts already in circulation. By the mid-sixteenth century, the printing house had largely replaced the manuscript workshop, and regulations were passed to codify and constrain a burgeoning industry. By 1600, an Englishman could paper the walls of his house with the broadsides, almanacs, ballads, tracts, and pamphlets

flying off the English presses. Yet while the production of manuscript books had slowed substantially, a whole industry of scribal activity had grown up around the preparation of deeds, wills, conveyances, and other financial documents as the English economy became ever more dependent on the written word. Throughout this period, riding the waves of changing media, amid the shifting currents of religious, political, and intellectual culture, readers grew in stature, transforming from the unnamed but identifiable compilers of handwritten manuscripts to the abstract and influential body of “Gentyl readers” evoked in the dedications of printed books.

By focusing on these readers and their experiences of the transition from manuscript to print, this dissertation will serve as one example of how historians can get at big questions through the close study of a single set of sources. Drawing from the methodologies of micro-history—a genre of historical research in which the historian focuses narrowly on one place or individual but draws conclusions that reflect wider trends in society—this exploration of manuscript and print culture in England could be viewed as a kind of micro-historical approach to book history, analyzing a single genre—the practical book—over a considerable period of time. For my purposes I have defined a “practical vernacular book” as a manuscript or printed book almost wholly comprised of pragmatic or instructional texts, and entirely, or nearly so, in the vernacular. These “how-to” books flourished within the rapidly expanding manuscript culture of the fifteenth century, appearing for the first time in the late-fourteenth century, and expanding exponentially within a few decades. Indeed, the number of vernacular practical books in the fifteenth-century archive is almost impossible to quantify because so very many of them survive.
To identify these practical books I have relied heavily on the work of literary scholars and manuscript specialists whose interest in vernacular pragmatic texts spans several decades of research. Thanks to the work these scholars have done to compile databases, concordances, and indexes of didactic Middle English texts and the manuscripts that contain them, like the Voigts-Kurtz database of Scientific and Medical Writings in Old and Middle English and volume ten of A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: Works of Science and Information, I have been able to track the circulation of instructional texts among hundreds of extant late medieval practical miscellanies. Using these databases and indices, as well as published catalogues of


manuscript holdings, I identified manuscripts containing almanacs, prognostications, *recepta medica*, herbals, ink and color-making recipes, and directions for animal husbandry, planting, fishing, cooking, or textile-making. I examined over 200 fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscripts from the British, Bodleian, Cambridge University, Trinity College Cambridge, Wellcome, University of Glasgow, Folger, Beinecke, and Houghton Libraries. From this large pool of possible sources, I excluded manuscripts which had lengthy passages in Latin and those which contained more religious, documentary, or literary material than instruction. I arrived at a selection of 140 vernacular, practical manuscripts, which range from recipe books to almanacs to miscellaneous compilations of useful knowledge. Many of these practical manuscripts, though originally separate in the medieval era, are now bound together in composite volumes, meaning that these 140 originally separate medieval manuscripts are now collected under 100 different shelfmarks.

My decision to focus on practical books over other genres was, in part, practical. After the printing press was brought to England in 1476, many of the practical texts found in manuscript collections were eagerly picked up by printers for publication.32

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Because they were not frequently religious in nature, practical instructional books remained quite popular after the English church’s break with Rome. Thus, the longevity of practical knowledge and practical books makes them an excellent source for understanding the shifts, turns, and twists of the transition from a culture of handwritten to printed books. Through searches of the English Short Title Catalogue and Early English Books Online, I have identified and viewed, most often in their digitized editions but sometimes in rare book rooms at the British, Bodleian, Cambridge University, and Folger Shakespeare Libraries, over 180 editions of printed books published in the period from 1485–1600 that draw on, or in some cases, copy directly from, genres of vernacular practical writing in fifteenth-century manuscript.  

Through analysis of these practical books in script and in print I highlight networks within which vernacular knowledge circulated in surprising ways among the common people of England—artisans, craftsmen, yeomen, and sometimes even the unlearned, including women and the poorer sort—to tease out how this knowledge was repackaged, reimagined, and reencountered thanks to the introduction of the press. Yet practical books allow for more than an analysis of the reception of everyday knowledge. Because manuscripts were bespoke creations they can reveal the sets of assumptions, habits, dispositions, and attitudes that conditioned how readers understood the function and purpose of a book as it pertained to their daily lives. And, because these manuscripts invited frequent reader additions and emendations, we can occasionally glimpse the

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33 Neither this sample of printed texts, nor my sample of practical manuscripts, are intended to be exhaustive. However, I believe this source sample is broadly representative of the output of English scribes and printers over these two centuries.
concrete attitudes and responses of readers as they encountered these texts, not only in the decades before the coming of the press, but long after. Thus, practical manuscripts offer a view of an emergent “reading public” in the fifteenth century while also providing a basis from which to determine the effects of the press on this “reading public” following the introduction of print to England.

The term “reading public” as I invoke it throughout this dissertation denotes both an actual body of readers whose developing relationship with the written word can be viewed through their emerging preference for written instruction and the concept of the imagined reader whose tastes and desires drove the mass production of printed texts. The distinction between these two ways of thinking about a “reading public” is important. In a manuscript culture, the existence of an increasingly large body of readers had a direct, material impact on the creation of manuscripts; manuscripts were not mass-produced in late medieval England, as far as we know, and thus each collection of practical knowledge is evidence of readerly expectation as encompassed in a singular book. In a print culture, the existence of a large body of readers as an abstract audience conditioned printers, as Roger Chartier put it, to model their books “on the expectations and abilities attributed to the public at which they [were] aimed.”

Thus printed books suggest that printers imagined a “reading public” with a particular set of expectations, but the books themselves do not reflect an individual reader’s needs.

Practical vernacular books circulated widely among socially diverse readers in pre-modern England, and as bits of practical writing were transferred into print, new

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books created still more communities of readers. Thus, a narrative of change over time is incumbent in my definition of an English “reading public.” Readers were shaped just as fully by the form and content of these books as the books themselves were shaped to suit a particular community of readers. Though this dissertation argues that a nascent “reading public” was in place before the coming of the press, it is equally concerned to chart how that public evolved and responded to print. Again, Chartier’s formulations are useful for understanding the aims of such a long term comparison: he argues that it is especially important to remain attuned to differing modes of reading in response to the same texts in order to understand how they might “be differently apprehended, manipulated, and comprehended” through processes that “organized historically and socially differentiated modes of access [to] texts.”

Because the same sets of recipes and instructional treatises appear over and over again within manuscript compilations and within printed books, I can identify changes over time to the organization, presentation, and ultimately, reception of these sources.

Vernacular practical books often operated at the level of the everyday. The texts contained within these books are often formulaic and, by themselves, not particularly illuminating of change over time. Indeed, my analysis has revealed deep continuities within the practices of English daily life over the span of these 200 years. Yet ironically, their stasis and durability actually make practical books ideal sources for a study of how English people responded to changing media: the substance of these books remained the same, but changes to their form, means of production, and networks of circulation had cultural consequences. Through analysis of a genre that sustained very little change from

35 Chartier, 8.
1400 to 1600, I have been able to track incremental changes to the reading and writing practices of English men and women, cultivated in response to books that were at the center of everyday life. I argue throughout this dissertation that these most basic reading and writing practices—interpreting an almanac, copying down a recipe, or writing a signature—are critical for understanding how completely the English populace felt the cultural ruptures of the sixteenth century.

Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, or the notion that “categories of thinking, categories of understanding, patterns of perception, systems of values, and so on, are the product of the incorporation of social structures,” is especially useful for conceptualizing how an almanac, a recipe book, or a marginal note could offer evidence for the success of religious reform, the adoption of a worldview centered on experimentation and discovery, or the establishment of a public sphere dependent on literate subject/citizens. It is not that these events were caused by practical books, or even that practical books typically contain evidence of the religious beliefs, political views, or scientific presuppositions of their readers. Rather, this dissertation traces how these events gradually altered social and cultural structures; their effects ran deep enough that readers and writers experienced the consequences of those new social and cultural structures even at the level of everyday interaction with formulaic and quotidian books. These everyday interactions played an important role in helping readers and writers gradually adapt to new media forms, new modes of reading, new ways of knowing the world, and new ways of wielding authority. And this is precisely the point: if we can find evidence of readers adapting to and

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internalizing new cultural and social structures even within the pages of practical books, then we are much closer to answering the question of how deep cultural change took hold in early modern England.

III. Plan of study

Practical books cannot tell the complete story of the English people’s developing relationship to the written word. I have already filled a couple of pages with indictments of early modern historians for not paying attention to English culture before 1530, and I would be equally remiss if I did not contextualize this study of practical books within the much deeper history of reading and writing in England. Further, the explosion in production of vernacular how-to books in the first decade of the fifteenth century is just one effect of a series of changes to writing, language, and book-making that shaped English book culture in the late medieval period. Thus, my first chapter will provide a survey of scholarship on books, documentary culture, and reading practices in England up to 1400, with special focus on the growth of documentary culture in Norman England, as detailed by Michael Clanchy. I will then turn to an in-depth description of the “manuscript culture” of the fifteenth century, including description of how manuscript books were made, where they were made, by whom they were made, and who they were sold to. Finally, I will survey the fifteenth-century archive to give an overview of literacy rates among fifteenth-century English men and women, the sorts of books English people owned and read, and how practical books fit within the book culture of the fifteenth century. This introductory treatment of “manuscript culture” serves as background and as
a jumping off point for my treatment of individual manuscripts and printed books throughout the rest of the dissertation.

The remainder of the dissertation, chapters two, three, and four, are organized around the experiences of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century readers who encountered these practical books. Chapter two explores habits of reading practical knowledge. Through analysis of almanacs and prognostications that use icons, images, and symbols to impart information, this chapter demonstrates that within late medieval England, cultural appreciation for the value of “reading images” extended beyond the confines of religious practice. I then compare the visual language of these pictorial manuscripts with the wealth of printed almanacs and prognostications that arrived on the English market in the early sixteenth century. I argue that the limited expertise of English woodcutters, combined with the conventions of the printed page, made reproduction of this visual language difficult in print. Though late medieval English visual culture was not entirely forgotten, by 1556 the host of observational, recollective, and reflective visual practices described as “reading” in the fifteenth century had given way to a world of print and text. By drawing attention to what was a sharp break in visual culture in the early sixteenth century, this chapter provides a new perspective on the iconophobia of the English Reformation.

Chapter three explores how English people understood the origins, purpose, and function of practical knowledge. I compare the contents and composition of four late medieval practical miscellanies and then situate these four within the larger corpus of 107 medieval practical manuscripts surveyed for this dissertation. I investigate what late medieval compilers and readers thought they were doing when they gathered recipes,
instructional treatises, and various household and craft directives into manuscript collections. Next I trace the movement of practical texts from manuscript into early printed books to reveal how the pressures of a commercial book market gradually transformed the ways practical texts were presented to readers. I argue that emphasis on novelty and originality conditioned readers to expect that “new” practical knowledge might be discovered in the pages of a printed book. Finally, I draw attention to those categories of practical knowledge common to manuscript which were not reproduced in print, arguing that the development of an epistemological distinction between published and unpublished knowledge contributed to the gendering of certain categories of knowledge as “feminine,” “secret,” or, both, with important consequences for women in early modern England.

Chapter four focuses on writing, analyzing fifteenth- and sixteenth-century reader marks, annotations, and additions found in medieval practical manuscripts. Through comparison of the different scripts used in these reader marks, this chapter traces the gradual development of everyday writing habits among the English populace. It explores the cultural, epistemological, and political effects of the transition from a culture dominated by professional scribal production to one in which writing might be done by amateurs. By examining the same sets of sources that inspired reader interactions from 1400 to 1600, this chapter will compare writing practice both before and after the advent of the press, noting how the ubiquity of written texts following the coming of the press encouraged still more manuscript creation. Through examination of these reader marks, I argue that practical books served as ideal locations for developing epistolary, documentary, and literary practices among fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English men
and women. Finally, by presenting a long view of reader marks from the fifteenth to mid-sixteenth centuries, this chapter links the scribal practices of the pre-print world to those post-print, offering a genealogy for the “public sphere” of later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England that begins with marginal recipes, notes, and signatures in medieval practical books.

In conclusion, this dissertation reveals the critical importance of equal attention to manuscript and print culture if we are to understand the tremendous social, cultural, religious, political, and intellectual revolutions of sixteenth-century England. The seeds of these revolutions were sown in the fifteenth century, as men and women became accustomed to interacting with books in their everyday lives through the proliferation of practical manuscripts. Practical books do not explain the theological disputes that spurred on reformers, or the turn toward novelty and discovery after several centuries of adherence to epistemologies that emphasized tradition, or the expansion of “politic” opinions and public engagement with power, but they can reveal the cultural and social conditions that led to these momentous events and dictated their successes. As it turns out, it does matter when people get the same old information in entirely new ways—a conclusion that reveals a great deal about early modern England, but also informs the way we understand the world today.
CHAPTER 1
The Making of a Manuscript Culture

To say that the seeds of English book culture were sown centuries before practical vernacular books flourished in the fifteenth century would be to briefly understate a wealth of scholarship on the development of written culture in medieval England. The phenomenon of increasing access to the written word over the course of the late medieval period is not confined to England, but the English experience is perhaps unique in that it has been so well-documented by historians and literary scholars. The terms of this discussion were largely set in 1979 with the publication of M. T. Clanchy’s monumental From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307. Since then, robust scholarship on medieval literacy, reading and writing practices, and English written culture have added to Clanchy’s original thesis, but those who continue in this line of scholarship remain indebted to his work on legal writing and the growth of English bureaucracy. However, even so comprehensive and excellent a study as Clanchy’s had to grapple with the question of how a historian justifies an “origin” for literate culture when such a culture is as old as recorded history.\(^1\) Clanchy began with the Norman Conquest, but he readily

\(^1\) This may seem like an overstatement, but in fact the field of “literacy studies” hinges on the work of E. A. Havelock, who argued that all of Western thought can be traced to the moment when the ancient Greeks transitioned from oral to written culture. See E. A. Havelock, The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). Drawing heavily from Havelock’s work, anthropologists Jack Goody and Ian Watt argued that the transition from oral to written culture marks a fundamental, transcultural, and transhistorical change in human behavior; see Jack Goody and Ian Watt, “The Consequences of Literacy,” Studies in Society and History 5, no. 3 (April 1963): 304–45; Jack Goody, The Domestication of the Savage Mind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Also heavily influenced by Havelock’s work, Walter Ong argued that distinct stages in human culture can be traced
admits that his study could have begun with the Anglo-Saxons, or still further back in time, with Roman settlement.  

The problem of identifying a “turning point” or initial date for the rise of a particular kind of literacy is that any “turning point” must by necessity rely on the presence of a prior understanding of words, reading, and writing. No book, document, or recipe arises out of a vacuum. Thus, while my exploration of early English literary and documentary culture will be only a brief survey of a wealth of excellent scholarship, one cannot understand the series of developments that led to the proliferation of vernacular practical books in fifteenth-century England without understanding the “literate mentality” that came before. Section one of this chapter will demonstrate how trends in government, religion, and reading and writing in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries reshaped English culture to make the written word more accessible—and more desirable—for increasing numbers of the English population. Section two will explore the rise of Middle English in the fourteenth century, and the attendant challenge to traditional hierarchies of knowledge that came with the adoption of the vernacular. In both of these sections, I demonstrate how older trends in reading and writing, book ownership, and education paved the way for the book culture of the fifteenth century and the flowering of

through attention to communication; see Walter J. Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (London, 1982). Finally, anthropological arguments for “transitional” moments in human culture between orality and literacy have focused attention on the medieval period, as it has been characterized by Ong as a period when “interactions between orality and literacy reached perhaps an all-time high”; see Walter J. Ong, “Orality, Literacy, and Medieval Textualization,” New Literary History 16, no. 1 (1984): 1–12; D. H. Green, “Orality and Reading: The State of Research in Medieval Studies,” Speculum 65, no. 2 (1990): 267–80.  

vernacular practical books. Yet phrases like “paved the way for” tend to give the reader a sense of inevitability—that practical vernacular books had to happen in the fifteenth century. Instead, I hope that in highlighting all of the ways that fifteenth-century vernacular practical books drew on earlier trends, I can also demonstrate how innovative these books were in combining elements of book and reading culture from previous centuries in ways specific only to this genre—a genre which, I argue, represents a substantial and significant shift in English literate culture.

In section three, I will address innovations in manuscript production and changes to the structure and organization of manuscript producers over the course of the fifteenth century. Next, I will turn to the manuscript culture of the fifteenth century to give a fuller picture of readers and the books that they owned. Finally, I will conclude the chapter with a survey of some of the best-known “practical books” of the fifteenth-century archive.

Practical books are by their nature highly varied and variable, featuring different groupings of useful, instructive texts addressing a wide range of needs. Thus I will close with an attempt to describe, but perhaps not define, the genre. My aim in resisting simple classification is to point out just how varied, creative, innovative, and open book culture was by the late fifteenth century at the moment when print arrived on the scene to redefine and reclassify both the “book” and the “reader” over the first half of the sixteenth century.

I. The “literate mentality” in medieval England

In 1400, England was a place governed by the written word. It did not become such a place overnight, but rather, over centuries, transitioned from a culture where
literacy and writing were the prerogatives of the elite—either within government or within the church—to a culture where even a humble peasant might know enough Latin to produce the legal formulae necessary to draft wills, copy charters, and record deeds.\(^3\) According to Michael Clanchy, the Norman Conquest in 1066 set in motion a series of changes to English culture that resulted in significant growth in the use of governmental documents, in a bureaucratic legal system, and in the rise of “pragmatic literacy” and a “literate mentality” among the English people. This is not to say that pre-Norman, Anglo-Saxon England was some cultural backwater. The manuscripts produced at English monastic sites like Lindisfarne or Wearmouth-Jarrow were critical to the transmission of early Christian texts, and education at those centers rivaled anything elsewhere in Europe.\(^4\) Though Latin was the language of religious life throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, England’s Anglo-Saxon rulers also cultivated written forms of their native language in charters and royal writs, as well as in works of literature and history, such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, an Old English history of the English people.\(^5\) This is all to say, of course, that the practice of reading and writing in England was established long before the Norman Conquest of 1066, and certainly before the fifteenth century.

Whether because of or in spite of this pre-existing literate culture in Anglo-Saxon England, the Norman conquerors embraced the use of writing as a symbol of their

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\(^5\) About 2,000 of these Anglo-Saxon writs and charters survive. The earliest portions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* were written in the reign of Alfred the Great in the ninth century. See, Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 27–28.
domination. In addition, the Normans brought with them the tradition of using Latin as the written language of governance, and following the Norman Conquest this practice linked England with the Roman church and other continental kingdoms. Within a few decades, the Normans compiled Domesday Book, a record in Latin of landholdings in England at the time of the Conquest. Over the next two centuries, Norman, Angevin, and Plantagenet rulers would rely more and more frequently on written documentation to secure their dominance over the English magnates and consolidate their authority. According to Clanchy, the rapid proliferation of governmental and legal documents throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries testifies to a growing sense—among both English rulers and those being ruled—that writing was necessary for the exercise of power and the preservation of rights to land and other property. Along with this dependence on written legal documentation came a host of new practices intended to bolster the authority of writing: the widespread use of seals and dates to authenticate documents, the rejection of legal traditions that valued communal memory over written record, and the preservation and indexing of documents for future use.

With so many writs, charters, and deeds to copy, authenticate, and record, twelfth- and thirteenth-century England had an ever-growing demand for educated men. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge were the result of this need to populate England’s growing bureaucratic apparatus. Unlike early medieval monastic and cathedral schools

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6 Clanchy, 32–33.
7 Clanchy, 28, 46–51, 145–184, 295–327.
which had taught the liberal arts to clerics destined for a life of monastic piety, the new universities gave their students an education in law, theology, and medicine, in addition to the classical liberal arts curriculum of grammar, logic, rhetoric, music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. The universities imparted professional skills, like the *ars dictaminis*, or the art of dictation and scribal letter-writing, to men who found new opportunities as administrators, lawyers, physicians, and bureaucrats outside monastic walls.  

To equip these new legions of students with the texts they would need to study the liberal arts, manuscript production also moved out of the monastic and cathedral centers and into the university towns.

The development of documentary culture and the practice of record-keeping made “pragmatic literacy” the prerogative for an entire class of university-educated English bureaucrats, but by the fourteenth century, members of the lower orders who traded goods, owned property, or kept records and drafted wills for members of their community began to feel its influence too. Record-keeping inculcated the practice of using writing to preserve useful information (such as in a deed) or to give instruction (such as in a will). Readers expected to find useful, verifiable, and authoritative information in documents. It is not hard for us to see how this pragmatic literacy, defined by Malcolm Parkes as “the literacy of one who has to read or write in the course of transacting any kind of business,” would lead to a more quotidian sort of transactional or instructive writing, such as that

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found in fifteenth-century vernacular practical books. Richard Britnell’s definition of a “pragmatic text” as a piece of writing that “exists to direct the behavior of other people” applies just as well to recipes, almanacs, and agricultural treatises as it does to legal writs. Moreover, vernacular practical books frequently feature personal record-keeping entries—lists of rents owed, patients cured, or family dates—in addition to writing that directs behavior, like recipes. These books represent the full spectrum of “pragmatic” scribal activity.

Although the growth of practical literacy is obviously of tremendous importance for this dissertation, it was only one mode of engagement with texts in medieval England. Clanchy is certainly correct that medieval men and women grew more comfortable with writing thanks to secular trends in government, property-holding, and legal practice, but this does not mean that medieval people saw “pragmatic literacy” as the most important kind of reading practice. It is worth remembering that for medieval people, the primary focus of reading (lectio) was lectio divina—the act of reading as meditation on the divine. Even accounting for the spread of “pragmatic literacy,” reading for purposes of religion—whether to sustain one’s faith, provide succor or comfort, or inspire devotion—retained its pride of place in late medieval culture. Increasingly, by the fourteenth

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13 For more on personal record-keeping in practical books, see Chapter 4. A notable example of personal record-keeping in an edited practical book is that of John Crophill, physician and bailiff of Wix Priory, who recorded the patients he treated, rents collected, and dates of births and deaths in his personal practical book; see Lois Ayoub, “John Crophill’s Books: An Edition of British Library MS Harley 1735” (PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1994), 201, ff. 36–37, 40 in the manuscript.
century, just as documentary practice had extended into the lower orders of English society, so too did “sacred literacy” extend to the laity.\textsuperscript{14}

Though innovations in the late medieval church are somewhat beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is important to note that the late medieval period saw sustained and widespread efforts to extend to the laity religious practices that had previously been contained within monastic walls. The most well-known of these innovations in late medieval religious life is the rise of the mendicant orders who emphasized poverty and preaching as the \textit{vita apostolica}, or apostolic life. Men and women throughout Europe embraced the notion that religious life could be practiced \textit{within} the world (most notably in the rise of female ascetics and lay orders like the Devotio Moderna) in opposition to a millennium of religious thought that had emphasized withdrawal from the world for a select few.\textsuperscript{15} Among its many achievements, the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 acknowledged that the laity sought access to religion and personal devotion and structured its vision for the church around that theme.\textsuperscript{16} But expanding its reach deep into the villages of medieval Europe required that the church devise a program of religious

\textsuperscript{14} Clanchy defines four different categories of literacy for the late medieval period, of which he argues that “sacred literacy” was most important and influential. In particular, see his explanation for how monastic practices of book-making led to lay ownership of personal religious books in Clanchy, “Looking Back from the Invention of Printing,” 10–15.


instruction and episcopal oversight to ensure that the laity adhered to a strict line of orthodoxy. Parish priests shouldered much of this pastoral burden, as they were required to hear and respond to confession before their parishioners could receive the now-mandated annual sacrament of communion.\textsuperscript{17}

Not surprisingly, church concerns for the education of the clergy—and via the clergy, the laity as well—led to the composition of instruction manuals for pastoral care. In 1281, Archbishop Pecham of Canterbury issued the Lambeth Constitutions, of which one section, the \textit{Ignorantia sacerdotum}, specified which tenets of the faith parish clergy should know in order to provide appropriate pastoral care for their congregants. By 1357, Pecham’s directive to educate the clergy had been transformed into an itemized list of necessary doctrine for the laity, the \textit{Lay Folks’ Catechism}, produced by John Thoresby, Archbishop of York. Though Thoresby’s original list of the essentials of the faith was composed in Latin, he had a monk translate the list into English so that it could be read aloud at weekly mass, thus inculcating appropriate devotion in England’s parishioners. This translation effort was never intended to provide reading material for the laity (it was to be read aloud, after all), but once written, these pastoral manuals made their way into the hands of congregants.\textsuperscript{18} What had begun in the thirteenth century as a simple directive to ensure that the laity understood the basic tenets of Christian doctrine so that they could give confession, receive communion, and recite their Creed, \textit{Ave Maria}, and \textit{Pater Noster}

\textsuperscript{17} Swanson, 52–3; Duffy, \textit{The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580}, 54.

\textsuperscript{18} Swanson, 59–60; Duffy, 53–5.
blossomed over the late medieval period into a complex, sometimes contradictory, but increasingly rich lay piety, much of it centered on *lectio divina*.\(^\text{19}\)

Books of Hours, or *Horae*, containing a standard selection of psalms, hymns, and prayers to be recited at each of the eight monastic “hours” of the day are perhaps the most well-known genre of religious book to mark the passage of sacred literacy from monastic confinement into the chapels of well-to-do medieval households. As early as the first half of the thirteenth century, English scribes began to produce stand-alone Books of Hours for lay patrons. From the very beginning, many of these devotional manuscripts seem to have been intended for female readers whose names or portraits occasionally appear on their richly illustrated leaves.\(^\text{20}\) For these women, and for most of the laity, the ability to read a passage of scripture or recite a prayer in Latin was all the literacy they would ever need. That level of familiarity with the written word could be learned at home by rote memorization, and indeed the alternate title for Books of Hours—primers—references how these formulaic devotional works were used as a “primer” to prepare children to read. Indeed, after 1300 there is evidence that children were frequently taught the early stages of reading by their mothers at home, first mastering the alphabet, then learning to recognize the Latin prayers in a Book of Hours by sight, before finally moving on to Latin grammar (if they were male children).\(^\text{21}\)

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\(^{19}\) Duffy, 53–77, esp. 62.

\(^{20}\) The earliest Book of Hours produced for English readers is likely the De Brailes Hours, BL Additional MS 49999. The manuscript was created in Oxford around 1240 for a female reader. See Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 8–9, 30–4.

As manuscripts designed for acts of personal devotion, Books of Hours demonstrate how the practice of *lectio divina* had changed over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from a relatively public act of oration in monastic halls to a private act of silent meditation in one’s own chapel. In his exploration of English Books of Hours, Eamon Duffy notes that these were “intensely personal” books, which were “an aspect of the promotion of lay interiority, the personalising of religion which had been one of the aims of pastoral strategy and spiritual direction” since Fourth Lateran. The personalizing quality of Books of Hours connects them directly with later vernacular practical books. Though at first vernacular practical books appear to have little in common with Latin *Horae*—the former are mostly unadorned compilations of non-religious texts while the latter are beautifully illuminated books with a prescribed program of devotional reading—increasing use of these personal devotional books established the practice of private book ownership, so that by the fifteenth century, one might imagine a personal book of recipes, instructions, and “how-to” treatises.

By the early fourteenth century, evidence suggests a growing appreciation among the English for writing in various forms. Certainly a few well-educated peasants were familiar with written legal documentation and saw its value. Numerous wealthy women throughout England owned their own private copies of devotional books. By 1300, it

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23 Duffy, *Marking the Hours*, 23, 55.
seems clear that “written culture” had infiltrated English society to include members of most social orders. And yet, medieval terminology makes it difficult for a historian to quantify the number of “literate” persons in England even by that point. As Clanchy explains, originally the term *literatus* denoted someone with a quality education, which of course also meant the ability to read and write in Latin. By the late medieval period, the term *literatus* came to denote someone who could *read* Latin, but not necessarily write it. For much of the medieval period, writing was manual labor done by university-trained scribes, and thus was not a skill cultivated by most. The ability to read the vernacular—either French or English as the case may have been in late medieval England—was never described by the term *literatus*. By the early fourteenth century, even contemporary medieval observers recognized that a new vocabulary was needed to distinguish the increasing number of men and women who could read French or English but not Latin from those who could not read at all. The rise of the vernacular had redefined what it meant to read.

II. England’s vernaculars

In the two centuries following the Norman Conquest, the language of English kings, and thus the English court, was French. England’s first vernacular, Anglo-Norman French, was written down because those in charge *spoke* French. Beginning in the twelfth century, various elite members of English society began to commission translations, compose poetry, and write legal treatises in their native tongue. Though spoken French

24 Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 194, 231–4, 246–52.
became less common at court over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the written form of the language retained its authority, particularly within legal proceedings and court documents. By the mid-thirteenth century, this written French (Law French) replaced Latin as the language of English justice. And even though French was never the native language of the majority of the English population, the concept of an authoritative written language (Law French) distinct from the language of the masses (English) was nothing unusual—a millennium of writing in Latin made this division seem natural.²⁶

Many compositions in Anglo-Norman French (or translations from Latin) were pragmatic texts. Philippe de Thaon, a cleric in the court of Henry I, was a pioneer of Anglo-Norman literature, and one of his earliest compositions was a didactic verse explaining how to calculate moveable feast days.²⁷ Although medical treatises and collections of recipes were most often composed or copied in Latin, scattered Anglo-Norman medical recipes appear in the margins of Latinate books from the early twelfth century, and the occasional Anglo-Norman translation of a Latinate medical treatise can be found in manuscripts dating from the thirteenth-century.²⁸ In addition, prognostications, treatises on falconry, instructions on bloodletting, culinary recipes, veterinary medicine, charms, and recipes for pigments and colors can all be found in

²⁶ For an excellent survey of the uses of French in medieval England, see Clanchy, From Memory to Written Record, 200–23.
²⁷ Clanchy, 218.
Anglo-Norman, though many of these texts only survive in two to three manuscript witnesses. Because of lower rates of manuscript production in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Anglo-Norman practical texts never circulated as widely as their Middle English counterparts in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but the presence of even a few witnesses of Anglo-Norman recipes, treatises, and instructions suggest an early interest in translating useful knowledge into the vernacular. These Anglo-Norman translations may have provided source material for later Middle English medical and craft recipes in the practical books of the fifteenth century.

Indeed, two of the most popular “practical texts” to circulate in late medieval England were original compositions in Anglo-Norman French. Robert Grosseteste and Walter de Henley both composed Anglo-Norman treatises on estate management in the thirteenth century, the former composed between 1235 and 1250 and dedicated to a Countess, and the latter written around a generation later as a detailed guide to


30 See Hunt’s discussion of the Middle English translation of Roger Frugard’s Chirurgia in BL Sloane MS 240 and its similarities to an earlier Anglo-Norman version; Hunt, Anglo-Norman Medicine, 14–17. Occasionally, Anglo-Norman pragmatic texts were copied in fifteenth-century manuscripts, though Dean and Boulton only find eight such instances; see Dean and Boulton, Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts, nos. 387, 388, 399, 406, 421, 428, 439, 440.
agricultural practices.\textsuperscript{31} These practical works were composed in Anglo-Norman French because until the mid-fourteenth century landowning elites—those who would need instruction on estate management—spoke Anglo-Norman French. Yet just a generation after the composition of De Henley’s treatise, the children of these elites were being sent off to be educated in proper French outside the home, as pages at court (for boys) or within nunneries (for girls). By 1300, French was losing its grip as a mother tongue even within the wealthiest households.\textsuperscript{32}

That Anglo-Norman practical texts were intended for a relatively elite and educated audience is borne out in the evidence of their manuscript transmission. For example, in her study of the extant manuscripts containing Grosseteste’s, Henley’s, and two other treatises on husbandry in Anglo-Norman French, Dorothea Oschinsky found that of the fifty-three extant manuscripts containing one or more of these treatises, twenty-four were compendia of legal instruction, also in Anglo-Norman French, dating from sometime between the late thirteenth and late fourteenth centuries. Twenty-nine of the manuscripts containing husbandry treatises can be attributed to their original owners, and of those, twenty-three belonged to a monastic order, nearly all of them Benedictine,

\textsuperscript{31} Dorothea Oschinsky suggests that the Countess to whom Grosseteste directed his \textit{Rule} was Eleanor de Quincy, Countess of Lincoln, who was widowed in 1240; “Medieval Treatises on Estate Management,” \textit{The Economic History Review} 8, no. 3 (1956): 305–6. For an alternative view of the \textit{Rule’s} intended reader, see Michael Burger, “The Date and Authorship of Robert Grosseteste’s Rules for Household and Estate Management,” \textit{Historical Research} 74, no. 183 (February 1, 2001): 110.

for whom estate management and agriculture were important components of their rule. The creation of these “reference books” and the grouping together of various instructional texts—some legal, some estate-related—that happen to be in the same language looks a bit like the fifteenth-century practices that led to the proliferation of Middle English practical books. Yet although these earlier Anglo-Norman collections were compiled for practical use, they still reflect earlier medieval practices of book ownership and compilation. Like many medieval manuscripts, these were compiled and used within a monastic setting, communally owned and intended for corporate use, whereas fifteenth-century practical books most often reflect an individual reader’s tastes or family ownership and compilation.

The adoption of Law French and the growth of Anglo-Norman literature marked the first successful merging of spoken and written language in England. The momentous step of creating an authoritative written language with grammar rules, orthography, and syntax from a language spoken by contemporaries opened up a world of possibilities for the development of England’s true vernacular, Middle English. In contrast to learned Latin, which by the high medieval period was a “textualized language,” meaning that its transmission was tied directly to writing, Anglo-Norman French evolved from oral forms of the French language. The privileging of Law French over Latin in legal record-
keeping demonstrated that a relatively new written language—one that had emerged from the spoken language of at least one segment of the English population—could be used for literary innovation and invested with documentary and legal authority. Once that precedent was set, it was only a matter of a few decades before the language of the English people, Middle English, developed into its own written form.

If legal and “pragmatic” texts are the key to understanding the “literate mentality” of medieval English people as Clanchy has suggested, then a series of milestones over the course of the fourteenth century illustrate how the development of Law French quickly paved the way for the flourishing of Middle English. In 1327 Andrew Horn, then Chamberlain of the City of London, composed the city’s new charter in English as opposed to French. In 1344 the first petition was presented in English; in 1376, the first deed was written in English; and in 1387, Robert Corn recorded his will in English, the first time such a document was composed in that language.35 Perhaps most striking as a herald of the new vernacular was the 1362 passage of the “Act for Pleading in English” (ironically recorded in the Parliamentary rolls in French). Enacted by Edward III, this act acknowledged that the “French Tongue” (la lange Franceis) was “much unknown” (trop desconue) among the English and thus commanded that all formal pleading in English courts should be conducted in “the English tongue,” (la lange engleis) described as “the Tongue of the Country” (la lange du païis).36 By Clanchy’s terms, Middle English had arrived.

The passage of the “Act for Pleading in English” marks the first time that a person’s inability to comprehend the language of authority was presented as an impediment to English governance. No doubt thousands of English men and women had appeared before various courts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and spoken in their native tongue only to have their words translated into French or Latin as a part of formal procedure.37 The passage of the “Act for Pleading in English” specifically chipped away at a hierarchy that had for centuries distinguished the language of record from the language of the people. To our modern sensibilities, this turn may seem inevitable or even natural, so accustomed are we to grouping speaking, reading, and writing as complementary cognitive abilities. And yet for men and women living in fourteenth-century England, the development of Middle English as a literary and legal language occasioned much more than a simple change in vocabulary. In many ways the shift toward the vernacular fundamentally reshaped the relationship between a text and its audience, and furthermore, challenged long-standing hierarchies structured by unequal access to knowledge.

In the tradition of scholarship that had predominated in Europe since the time of the early medieval cathedral schools, students gained knowledge through diligent study of the great classical and patristic Latin authorities. These men were auctores: writers whose morality and wisdom elevated them to a position of authority within a hierarchical system of knowledge that depended on the validity of ancient sources.38 In medieval

37 See, for example, Clanchy’s explanation of the various uses for “languages of record” in thirteenth-century court proceedings in From Memory to Written Record, 206–9.
universities, students learned church doctrine and navigated thorny philosophical questions through recourse to the *auctoritas* of the ancients, and, eager to bolster their own position within academic disputations, compiled commentaries on and summaries of authoritative Latin texts.39 But although these students debated the merits of various philosophical and theological points of view, they did not presume that their scholarship would ever surpass that of their ancient sources. In the mid-twelfth century, Bernard of Chartres famously remarked that the scholars of his era were able to “see farther” than their ancient predecessors, not because of their greater wisdom, but because they “stood on the shoulders of giants.” He and others in the universities believed that they could produce treatises of similar learning to those of the ancients, but that these treatises would never carry the same authority.40

By contrast, there was no medieval tradition for vernacular learning, let alone vernacular *auctores*. There was no road map for importing the wisdom of the ancients into the “vulgar” tongue. For pioneering vernacular writers, the creation of new genealogies of *auctoritas* was critical to their social and intellectual status. The men who are now credited as the founding fathers of English letters actively worked to construct an identity for themselves by borrowing various techniques from Latin academic scholarship to bolster their authority.41 Vernacular writing is full of references to an “original”

source, narrative, or author, and vernacular writers frequently employed stock phrases as reassurance of the veracity and authority of their writing.⁴² Even vernacular writers who simply translated sources of auctoritas directly out of Latin and into the vernacular (as in the case of numerous scientific or medical treatises in fifteenth-century practical books) felt that they were participating in a very ancient tradition in which translation and compilation were well-respected academic endeavors.⁴³ The critical point here is that early vernacular writers worked hard to reestablish some of the traditional hierarchy and authority of Latin within their Middle English texts. They recognized that the adoption of this new written language was uncharted territory. Once pieces of writing passed into English, they were easily accessible to people who had only vague notions of the auctoritas that had been marshaled to support, contextualize, and verify that writing.

This diffusion of knowledge beyond the walls of the university was accelerated by the establishment of new schools throughout England to educate laymen’s children. Beginning in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, the wealthiest of England began to see the endowment of grammar schools as a charitable act. These schools were intended to provide boys throughout the towns and cities of England with Latin education so that they might become priests, or at the very least, schoolmasters. Endowed schools offered education in Latin grammar, literature, and culture for a minimal fee, or, sometimes for

⁴² As Ruth Crosby put it: “Originality was the last claim of the medieval poet.” See her discussion of “truth claims” and stock phrases in medieval verse, in “Oral Delivery in the Middle Ages,” Speculum 11, no. 1 (1936): 107–8.
no fee at all. After 1440, the rate of endowment for such schools increased steadily through the early decades of the sixteenth century so that by the 1510s endowment reached a rate of over one new school per year. In addition to these independent endowed schools, Latin grammar education continued in chantry schools attached to cathedrals and monastic houses, in song schools for chorister boys within the great cathedrals, and in some guild-sponsored urban schools. While the church was still the most common source of education in Latin grammar, after 1440 it is possible to speak of a movement within English society to bring Latin education under the control of the laity.\textsuperscript{44} As access to Latin education expanded, the teaching of Latin also changed: whereas earlier textbooks for English grammar schools had glossed Latin phrases in French for the children of elites, from the second half of the fourteenth century grammar textbooks began to use the English language, and after 1400, Latin to English (and vice versa) dictionaries appeared.\textsuperscript{45} Finally, although a university education was still a rarity among fifteenth-century Englishmen, by 1450 the number of laymen matriculating at Oxford and Cambridge had increased substantially to include the sons of minor gentry and a few within the aristocracy.\textsuperscript{46}

Latin was still the hallmark of a quality education in the fifteenth century, but the rise of vernacular writing did gradually reshape how English people thought about educating their children. If English was developing into a language of record, it stood to reckon that English children should know how to read and write the language.

\textsuperscript{44} Orme, \textit{Medieval Schools}, 225–54.
Increasingly after 1350, the terms of apprenticeship with the guilds of English cities required that boys be functionally literate in English in order to fulfill their contracts and conduct business for their masters. For the middling classes of England, particularly those yeomen, merchants, and artisans who lived in urban areas, the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries brought numerous opportunities for such an education. Primary schools throughout England taught reading and writing in English; these schools were “reading schools” attached to parish churches, chantries, hospitals, almshouses, and, in some cases, were run by the guilds themselves. For girls, it was much less common to receive a structured education in an English primary school, though certainly reading and writing instruction often occurred at home, where girls were encouraged to remain throughout their childhood.

Most of these people newly literate in English would have sought out translations of religious works as reading material before anything else. Lectio divina was still the most valued mode of reading, even in the vernacular. Books of Hours still served as “primers,” but new English versions made it so that those without Latin could also participate in the acts of hourly devotion and prayer directed to the Virgin Mary. The Lay Folks Mass Book and Meditations for spiritual exercise in the time of the mass provided those who could not understand Latin with explanations and admonitions concerning the meanings of, and appropriate responses to, the mass. The Prik of Conscience, an early

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48 Orme, Medieval Schools, 63–66.
49 Hanawalt, Growing up in Medieval London, 75.
fourteenth-century didactic religious poem that incites a lay reader to examine his conscience to ready himself for confession, survives in 130 manuscript copies, more than any other Middle English verse. These religious texts, along with vernacular passages from *vitae*, or saints’ lives, and lists of important religious feast days, would have provided a lay reader with a rudimentary but relatively orthodox religious education. Even English priests who by definition were supposed to meet the status of *literatus* had access to vernacular pastoral guides by the mid- to late fourteenth century. Two of the most popular, John Mirk’s *Instructions for Parish Priests* and his *Festial*, drew heavily from the early fourteenth-century Latin pastoral manual, *Oculus Sacerdotis*, but instead of offering lengthy Latin prose, Mirk’s was a relatively short collection of English verse.

Though religious texts were by far the most popular vernacular genre in late medieval England, the trend toward English composition and translation spread to other genres too. Whereas university students had driven a rise in the circulation of Latinate scientific and medical books throughout the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, around the last quarter of the fourteenth century we see the emergence and rapid dominance of practical books intended for the “householder.” Much of this work was undertaken by the same classes of people responsible for Anglo-Norman translations of

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practical texts: members of the landowning elite and the religious orders. The first medical treatise composed in English, the *Liber Uricrisiarum*, was written by a Dominican friar, Henry Daniel, in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. The English translation of Gilbertus Anglicus’s Latinate medical remedy collection also appears to have a monastic origin, as does the *Craft of Grafting*, attributed to a monk of Westminster, Nicholas Bollard.\(^5\) A number of other practical works were commissioned by English nobles, like the English translation of Guy de Chauliac’s treatise on surgery made for a fifteenth-century Duke of Bedford, or the translation of Palladius’s agricultural treatise, *De Re Rustica*, made at the request of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester in 1442–43.\(^5\) Occasionally very clear evidence of these translation efforts can be glimpsed within practical books themselves. For example, in one collection of recipes and herbal remedies a reader added English translations of “the names of the herbes that perteyneth to this boke” in the margins alongside their Latin nomenclature.\(^6\) Two other practical miscellanies include extensive glossaries of Latin herbal terminology with their corresponding English translations.\(^7\) In one of these, a later reader of “A regiment or direction of a good diette to be had” has added English translations of its chapter headings above the Latin originals, bringing those titles in line with the rest of the treatise that was recorded in English.\(^8\)


\(^{5}\) CUL MS Dd.6.29, f. 106v.

\(^{5}\) Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, ff. 134r–140r, and Bodleian MS Add. C. 246, ff. 49r–58r.

\(^{5}\) Bodleian MS Additional C.246, ff. 101v–107r.
In these cases of visible translation, as well as in relation to surgical treatises, herbals, urinaries, and dietaries, the English translations found in fifteenth-century practical books can be relatively easily linked to Latinate versions circulating contemporaneously with their vernacular counterparts. However, the same cannot be said for the scores of medical recipes that often appear alongside these treatises. In his work on late medieval vernacular medical books, Peter Murray Jones has concluded that it is “safest to assume that every vernacular text of medicine and science, for which conclusive evidence to the contrary does not exist, was originally translated out of Latin.”\(^{59}\) Though I am inclined to agree with Jones’s assessment of the origins of vernacular medical recipes, the interplay between Latin exemplars and word-of-mouth riffs on these original recipes makes tracing their origins very difficult. While the same themes and ingredients occur in recipe collections in Latin, Anglo-Norman French, and eventually, Middle English, the language and structure of these recipes shifted dramatically as oral traditions intermingled with textual prescriptions. Once in the vernacular, recipes could move back and forth from oral performance to textual transmission. Though terms like *mouvance* were coined to describe the variability of vernacular verse, the term applies just as readily to practical writing in the vernacular, and we should keep it in mind when considering late medieval attitudes toward vernacular practical knowledge.\(^{60}\)


\(^{60}\) Paul Zumthor defines a poet’s oral performance (*œuvre*) as distinct from its written copy (*textes*), highlighting the movement (*mouvance*) between the two to argue that no
The mouvance from oral mnemonic to written recipe and back again troubles any effort to pinpoint the “origins” of many of the recipes within fifteenth-century practical books. Such efforts are not only futile, they rest upon a fundamental misunderstanding of the way such knowledge circulated in late medieval England. Unlike the corpus of practical texts translated into Anglo-Norman French, Middle English vernacular works quickly found an audience beyond those in religious orders or the most elite. The rapid proliferation of practical manuscripts over the course of the fifteenth century illustrates just how mutable and ephemeral auctoritas was once it entered the vernacular. As soon as these texts appeared in Middle English, they made themselves available for excerpting, summarization, and revision without concern for attribution to an original source—textual practices that occur when a text is no longer an “authoritative” source, but rather a useful piece of instruction.61

By the fifteenth century when the vernacular was well-established as a textual medium in England, the specific auctoritas of a vernacular recipe mattered less, I would argue, than a general sense that a piece of writing had vaguely ancient origins. For example, four of the vernacular manuscripts studied in this dissertation contain a series of “stable” original form of medieval poetry can be discerned from manuscript exempla. His argument against modern privileging (or trying to identify) definitive authorial texts is useful for thinking about recipes that rarely have either authorial attribution or a stable form. The persistence of certain recipes in similar but not identical forms in various manuscripts is an illustration of his mouvance. See Paul Zumthor, Introduction à La Poésie Orale (Paris: Seuil, 1983). For criticism of Zumthor’s distinctions between orality and written text, see Joseph A. Dane, “The Lure of Oral Theory in Medieval Criticism: From Edited "Text" to Critical "Work",” Text, 1994, 145–160.

61 Pascale Bourgain writes of textual transmission within manuscript culture that the “mutability of texts was indeed an inherent part of their use. From the moment that they served a purpose, they were constantly modified and, in the minds of copyists and clients, improved. Hybridization and revival were constant.” See, “The Circulation of Texts in Manuscript Culture,” in The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches, 154.
medical recipes with the heading: “Here begynnys medicynys þat gode lechis haue mad and drawen owt of her bokys, Galyen and Aslipius and Ypocras, thei were beste [lechis] of þe world.”\textsuperscript{62} The prologue to these recipes invokes the \textit{auctoritas} of ancient physicians whose names were well-known to medieval practitioners without ever explicitly claiming a relationship between those “gode lechis” and the recipes that follow. A recipe or piece of instruction gained its credibility through a combination of references to authority: some recipes feature attributions to relatively well-known medieval sources like Charlemagne, Hippocrates, or Robert Grosseteste, while others feature personal testimonies of efficacy, as in instances of \textit{probatum est} written in the margins alongside various cures.\textsuperscript{63}

But while some recipes or instructional treatises moved easily into the vernacular, fifteenth-century practical manuscripts also contain evidence that readers were aware that certain categories of knowledge were better left in Latin. Though charms and magical recipes are quite common in fifteenth-century vernacular collections, these recipe-like entries were nearly always left in Latin.\textsuperscript{64} In many cases, the Latin in these recipes is grammatically incorrect, suggesting that the compiler of the collection was not in fact able to read that language. And yet, the prevalence of this practice suggests perhaps that readers felt it was safer to transmit these not-entirely-orthodox recipes in a language not readily comprehensible to a casual reader. Or, alternatively, Latin may have remained the

\textsuperscript{62} BL MSS Royal MS 17 A.xxxii, f. 43r; Royal 18 A.vi, f. 1r; Sloane 393, f. 22r; Sloane 540 A, f. 9v.
\textsuperscript{63} See Bourgain’s discussion of false attribution as a “marketing technique” in “The Circulation of Texts in Manuscript Culture,” 154.
\textsuperscript{64} Charms appear in forty of the ninety-six fifteenth-century vernacular manuscripts studied for this dissertation. See Appendix B for a list of these manuscripts and their contents.
language of choice for magic because it was the language of ceremony, and as such, accorded a special power to whatever was written in that language. Healing charms often blur the lines between religious ritual and magic and use words drawn from Scripture, the *Pater Noster*, or other church rites as the basis of their authority. The recurrence of Latin charms in practical manuscripts illustrates that fifteenth-century translators were navigating what was often a contested boundary between knowledge that was deemed suitably “vernacular” to warrant translation and knowledge that was deemed either illicit, privileged, or sacred, and thus ought not be made available to a broader reading public.

Latinate charms within otherwise vernacular practical manuscripts illustrate a primary concern in fourteenth-century England: what knowledge should be available in the vernacular, who should have access to it, and to what ends? These were not merely hypothetical questions either. The social repercussions of the Black Death (1348–49 in England) led to two significant events that centered on access to the written word, both of which fundamentally challenged hierarchies of knowledge and power. The first of these involved the Oxford don John Wyclif, whose strident criticisms of church corruption attracted both a wide following and the attention of the Church authorities. Wyclif’s theology originally developed in academic disputations (in Latin) among Oxford faculty, but following his expulsion from Oxford his message was translated into the vernacular and his followers, the Lollards, began preaching on Church corruption and insisting on a

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65 See, for example, BL MSS Add. 12195, f. 136v; Harley 2340, ff. 46r, 52, 54v–57v; Harley 3383, f. 19; Lansdowne 680, ff. 38r–39r, 41; Royal 18 A.vi, f. 102v; and Sloane 140; ff. 47v–48r; CUL MSS Dd.4.44, ff. 29r, 35r; and Dd.5.76, ff.5v–6r; and TCC MSS O.1.13, f. 172; and O.9.39, f. 18r.
vernacular translation of the Bible. Even contemporaries drew connections between this vernacular theology of reform and the second event to sweep late fourteenth-century England: the Peasants’ Uprising of 1381. The revolt involved thousands of peasants who objected to high rates of taxation and demanded manumission and an end to serfdom. It culminated in violent uprisings across England and the eventual arrest and execution of over one thousand rebels.

Historians have traditionally drawn connections between these two events because they offer, so it seems, a neat picture of how widening access to knowledge through vernacularization threatened to bring down systems of authority. Yet Lollards and rebels had very different visions of what vernacular writing could or would do to improve social and political conditions in fourteenth-century England. Chroniclers of the Rising (admittedly hostile to the rebels) wrote that in their raids, rebels would “burn all old records; and they butchered anyone who might know or be able to commit to memory the contents of old or new documents. It was dangerous enough to be known as a clerk, but especially dangerous if an ink-pot should be found at one’s elbow.” The rebels’ vehemence toward written records, which they imagined (not incorrectly) to be the tools of their oppression, illustrates vividly how the growing literate culture of late medieval England often hardened preexisting lines of social stratification. By the late fourteenth century, peasants were keenly aware of the role of writing in maintaining order and

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marshaling resources and power, but few had any part in that world, even as it moved into the vernacular.\textsuperscript{69}

The responses to Wyclif’s heresy and his Lollard followers also illustrate the complicated relationship between systems of power and the vernacular. Though Wyclif was condemned and expelled from Oxford in 1382, debates over the merits of vernacular translation continued within England’s universities until the early fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{70}

Strictly academic debates about vernacular scripture were all well and good, but after the Uprising and the spread of Lollardy to “unbeneficed mass-priests” and lay preachers, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel, took action.\textsuperscript{71} In 1407, he issued his \textit{Constitutions}, which outlawed possession of vernacular scripture (though one wonders how such an order could ever have been carried out in a manuscript culture).\textsuperscript{72} Although some have argued that the \textit{Constitutions} were a sign that English authorities were concerned with \textit{all} vernacular writing, in fact, Arundel rightly saw that the vernacular could be just as potentially beneficial to his authority as it was potentially transgressive.\textsuperscript{73}


\textsuperscript{71} McFarlane, \textit{John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity}, 103–7.

\textsuperscript{72} For more on these early efforts at censorship, see Nicholas Watson, “Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel’s Constitutions of 1409,” \textit{Speculum} 70, no. 4 (October 1995): 822–64.

\textsuperscript{73} Kathryn Kerby-Fulton has argued that the \textit{Constitutions} were relatively limited in scope, intended only to suppress the publication of vernacular scripture as opposed to all vernacular knowledge, a project that was likely doomed to failure thanks to the practices
Arundel was more than happy to review vernacular translations of religious materials in order to officially authorize them. In fact, he ordered that Nicholas Love’s translation of the *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyfe of Jesu*, a Franciscan devotional text, be propagated throughout England.\(^{74}\) For Arundel, Love’s vernacular translation might serve the purposes of the Church, even as Wyclif’s vernacular translation threatened to undermine Church authority.

This discussion of vernacular translation, composition, and the tradition of *auctoritas* in medieval culture has demonstrated the complex relationship between sources and figures of authority and vernacular writing. Sometimes, as in the case of a medical recipe, a vernacular writer might attach a famous name to provide a source of *auctoritas* for a piece of practical knowledge that otherwise might lack credibility or incite suspicion. Sometimes, as in the case of Wyclif’s Bible, sources of *auctoritas* were deemed too potentially transgressive for translation into the vernacular. But in other cases, as in the case of Nicholas Love or John Mirk, those in power recognized that vernacular writing offered a host of possibilities to expand their role in shaping the beliefs of an imagined group of readers. Inhabitants of fourteenth-century England recognized the role that texts and writing played in maintaining existing social structures of manuscript production. See *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 397–401.

as well. Though vernacular writing loosened some of these structures that stratified
English society, it by no means overturned them.

As secular works, the practical texts studied in this dissertation circulated in
English without incident, and indeed their status as non-religious works kept them in
circulation in print even after the Reformation. But even though recipes were never really
censored, this discussion of the origins of English censorship serves to illustrate the
extent to which fifteenth-century authorities had come to recognize an influential and
diverse body of readers in English society. Censorship laws, like Arundel’s *Constitutions*,
would have been unnecessary without a group of readers substantial enough to warrant
the intervention. Authorities were faced with a choice between censorship and publicity,
between efforts to preserve the *auctoritas* of particular types of knowledge while at the
same time capitalizing on opportunities to influence readers through texts. The conflict
between these two impulses—on the one hand, using vernacular writing to spread a
particular message, to bring people in line with a particular way of thinking, or to
personally profit from readers’ desire for knowledge, while on the other hand remaining
wary of the power of the vernacular to crack open established hierarchies of
knowledge—are the very hallmarks of a culture that for the first time recognizes the
power of a “reading public.” And of course, these tensions, like the English reading
public, would only grow with the introduction of the printing press in the late fifteenth
century.
IV. Manuscripts and their owners in fifteenth-century England

While the two previous sections have focused on broader developments in written culture that led to the reading, writing, and book ownership practices of fifteenth-century England, this section will briefly map out first, changes in manuscript production over the medieval period that culminated in the production of greater numbers of manuscripts in the fifteenth century, and second, educational, social, and economic trends that made it possible for more of the English to own these manuscripts. Though it may be impossible to determine exactly which came first, the moderately priced manuscript or the middling manuscript owner, these concurrent developments gave rise to the richly creative and open manuscript culture of the fifteenth century. I will illustrate how this particular and unique book culture of the fifteenth century led to the particular and unique genre of practical vernacular books. Finally, I will argue that the genre is exemplary of late medieval manuscript culture, and thus is particularly well-suited to reveal continuities, shifts, and changes within English book culture and among English readers following the introduction of the press.

Commercial manuscript production developed as a direct response to the rise of the universities. To accommodate the needs of students studying the new liberal arts curriculum, scriveners (scribes or writers), limners (those who added decoration or illustration), parchminers (makers of parchment), and bookbinders (those who sewed up and bound the leaves of parchment) began to set up shop in Oxford from the late twelfth century and in Cambridge from at least the early thirteenth century. Over time, the

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75 Records of “Job Illuminator, Radulfus Illuminator, and Robert Illuminator” working on Catte Street in Oxford survive from as early as 1230, and the street continued to be the center of the book trade there until the fifteenth century. See M. A. Michael, “Urban
book-making methods that had first developed in monastic scriptoria were adapted to prioritize efficiency in manuscript production. By the early fourteenth century, some within the book trade began to organize the components of manuscript production under a single authority: the stationer. These stationers would take commissions for the production of a book and would oversee the completion of all parts of the process as a manuscript moved from workshop to workshop through the hands of a scrivener, limner, and binder. Stationers were probably the same individuals who oversaw what became known as the *pecia* system of copying. First pioneered in Paris, *pecia* copying involved the farming out of individual quires or sets of quires from an authoritative exemplar so that an entire work could be copied simultaneously, or in the case of a student, a section of a larger work might be copied individually without access to (or funds for) the entire work.

Following on the success of the scriveners, parchminers, and limners of Oxford and Cambridge, a similarly robust commercial book market developed in London and neighboring Westminster. There is evidence to suggest that as early as the second half of the thirteenth century, lay copyists in London and Westminster were producing...
manuscripts of Anglo-Norman vernacular literature for wealthy lay patrons. These copyists followed Oxford and Cambridge’s lead, and they too eventually organized under stationers. Though the stationers of Oxford and Cambridge had university students clamoring to acquire manuscripts, London’s stationers benefited from the confluence of robust mercantile trade, the proximity of various craft industries, and the concentration of royal bureaucracy, all of which meant greater numbers of literate men and women with money to spend on books. As the trade in written materials grew throughout the fourteenth century, the scribal industry in London sought regulation and official status. In 1373, those who produced legal documents formed their own guild, the Writers of the Court Hand, or Scriveners. The Writers of the Court Hand were originally distinguished from the Writers of Text-Letter, or Stationers, by their use of cursive scripts. Scriveners recorded legal documents, often jotting down testimony or dictation in the moment, and thus used highly abbreviated Latin and a cursive hand that allowed them to write much more quickly. By contrast, the Writers of Text-Letter, or book scribes, traditionally used non-cursive “book hands,” marked by regularity of letter forms and distinctions between letters to carefully copy literary and religious works.

However, when the Writers of Text-Letter incorporated in 1403 as the Mistery of Stationers, the difference between the two guilds was based less on a distinction between

81 Michael, “Urban Production of Manuscript Books and the Role of the University Towns,” 171.
scripts and more on a distinction between the kind of work the two groups produced:

Scriveners continued to be called upon to write wills, draft deeds, and record writs, while Stationers copied, illustrated, and bound books. The collapse of rigid rules for which items ought to be copied in “Court Hand” versus “Text Letter” has everything to do with rising appetite for making and owning manuscripts among a larger segment of the English population. Books like practical medical or scientific works, literature, or informal religious texts were much cheaper to produce when scribes used the cursive script simply because it was so much faster to write.  

Malcolm Parkes has argued that the spread of cursive script demonstrates that men with “pragmatic literacy” were extending their interests beyond their professional obligation to read and write for legal purposes. By the turn of the fifteenth century, cursive script was used extensively in all types of books and documents, though “text-letter” was still used for very formal religious books or presentation manuscripts.

Other innovations indicate an awareness among London’s stationers that more efficient manuscript-making methods were necessary to meet the growing demands of patrons. Evidence from fourteenth-century medieval manuscript assemblages suggest that London stationers pioneered the use of “booklets” or “fascicules.” As defined by Pamela Robinson, a booklet was “a small but structurally independent production containing a

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82 Parkes, Scribes, Scripts, and Reader: Studies in the Communication, Presentation, and Dissemination of Medieval Texts, 284–5. Among the 178 scientific and medical manuscripts dating from 1375–1500 studied by Linda Ersahm-Voigts, only fifty-one were written in “book hand,” whereas the rest were either in Anglicana cursive, secretary cursive, or contained a variety of hands; see “Scientific and Medical Books,” 353.

single work or a number of small works.” Unlike the *pecia* system, which was a system based on the division of a single large work into smaller sections for separate copying, these “fascicules” might contain a single work of literature or a compilation of several shorter works represented in their entirety. Thus, a “booklet” might circulate independently as a complete short work or set or works, or several booklets might be combined to produce a customized compilation of different texts. Though “booklet” compilation was identified by scholars interested in the transmission of vernacular literature, the practice was no less common among scientific and medical works. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that these “booklets” may have been produced not on commission but instead on speculation, a practice that may foreshadow the speculative nature of the print market and the practice of selling individual printed books unbound in paper gatherings.

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86 Of the 119 scientific and medical manuscripts dating from 1375–1500 studied by Linda Ersahm Voigts, thirty-eight were assembled from separate booklets sometime before 1600; see Voigts, “Scientific and Medical Books,” 353.

87 Carol Meale suggests that the immensely popular *Brut* histories may have been produced on speculation for a large market of buyers in Meale, “Patrons, Buyers and Owners: Book Production and Social Status,” 215. Andrew Taylor gives an overview of
Whether large volumes or little booklets, whether commissioned or produced “on spec,” by the fifteenth century, some level of standardization in book production had begun to shape the industry. By the 1390s, the neighborhood around St. Paul’s Cathedral had become the center for book artisans in London, and this physical proximity facilitated the practice of shared labor among scribes, limners, and binders for a single book commission. C. Paul Christianson’s exhaustive work on the records of the wardens of London Bridge has revealed that 136 book artisans, including stationers, limners, and binders, set up shop in the vicinity of St. Paul’s in the century before 1500, and another 125 operated beyond the neighborhood of St. Paul’s elsewhere in London. Testamentary and codicological evidence reveals how styles of workmanship could be passed on from master to apprentice, a lasting legacy of the personal networks forged among these book artisans. Beyond London and the control of the Stationers, itinerant artisans worked freelance throughout the country copying, illustrating, or binding books for various patrons.

London’s book artisans certainly saw a fair number of changes to book-making procedures and organization over the course of the fourteenth century culminating in the incorporation of the Mistery of Stationers in 1403, but the following century would bring further radical transformations to book-making techniques—and all this before the press

the debate on whether the Auchinleck manuscript was produced on speculation or specifically commissioned in Taylor, “Manual to Miscellany,” 2–3.
88 It was not only scribes who became known as “stationers” by the mid-fifteenth century. We have evidence of thirty-nine men known as “limners” in records from 1385 to 1474, but after 1461 these “limners,” or the artisans who added penwork decoration and illustration to manuscripts, were also more commonly referred to as “stationers.” See Kathleen L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts 1390-1490*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles 6 (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1996), 27.
was introduced to England in 1476. Foremost in importance was the gradual adoption of paper as the medium of choice for book-making over the course of the fifteenth century. Although paper was introduced to the West in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it did not reach England until after 1300. By the turn of the fifteenth century, while paper was not entirely unknown to English readers, it was still quite rare to find it used in manuscripts. By 1600, however, fifty percent of all English manuscripts would be made of paper, and that figure runs even higher if one only considers practical books of the kind covered in this dissertation. Of the 107 fifteenth-century practical miscellanies studied for this dissertation, seventy, or almost two-thirds, are made from paper.

Parchment continued to be used for liturgical manuscripts or important documents like Statutes, but for the rest of the book-buying population, and particularly in regards to educational and pragmatic texts, the economic benefits of using paper made the choice relatively simple. In 1399, a skin cost around three pence. That skin might produce four sheets of quarto-sized or six to eight leaves of octavo-sized parchment. At the turn of the fifteenth century, a quire of paper cost roughly the same as a skin of parchment, but a

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92 In Linda Ersahm-Voitgts’s finds that eighty-nine of 178 scientific and medical manuscripts utilized paper in at least part of the manuscript; see “Scientific and Medical Books,” 353.
93 See Appendix B for a list of these manuscripts, their format, and contents.
quire of paper yielded twenty-five folio sheets. By 1450 the price of paper had been cut in half, and by 1500 the price of a quire of paper was a quarter that of a skin. Yet the influx of paper in English books cannot be attributed to English makers; English paper was not English-made until the early modern era and throughout the fifteenth century, English books featured paper from Italian or French producers.

We know that by the fifteenth century, more manuscripts were being produced more cheaply and more quickly thanks to structural developments in the organization of the Stationers and thanks to the introduction of new scripts and paper. Yet there would have been little call for faster scripts, better organization, or cheaper materials if there were not also a corresponding number of patrons interested in commissioning these manuscripts. Some of this increasing demand must have resulted from improvements in education and literacy described in the previous section, but some must also have resulted from improving economic circumstances in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Though there is some debate among historians as to the exact nature of the English economy following the Black Death, scholars generally agree that the collapse of the population due to plague mortality resulted in favorable economic conditions both for

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non-landowning laborers and small landowners. Compared to the first half of the fourteenth century, the fifteenth-century saw a drastic reduction in the percentage of landless and near-landless people in England. But urban areas in particular, always wealthier than the surrounding countryside, seem to have reaped the benefits of this economic boon. Archaeological records of buildings erected over the fifteenth century suggest a period of unparalleled prosperity, and inventories and wills of wealthy urban dwellers demonstrate that merchants and artisans were spending money on textiles, silver plate, and other household goods in mimicry of the consumer habits of aristocrats. Indeed, concern over the degree to which the lower sort were aping their betters through consumption of goods led to the passage of England’s first sumptuary laws in 1363.

This conspicuous consumerism included the commission of manuscripts as well. By the fifteenth century, in addition to the wealthy elite and the religious who had been the primary book owners of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a growing number of middling readers—artisans, merchants, and yeomen—began to own manuscripts.

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101 For examples of the now-common characterization of the fifteenth century as a period of increasing book ownership, see, Kate Harris, “Patrons, Buyers and Owners: The Evidence for Ownership and the Rôle of Book Owners in Book Production and the Book Trade,” in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375–1475*, 163–99; Carol M. Meale, “Patrons, Buyers and Owners: Book Production and Social Status,” in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375–1475*, 201–38; Susan Hagen Cavanaugh, “A
Kathleen Scott has identified 182 merchant book owners from the fifteenth century, many of whom owned works of vernacular literature in addition to the standard religious works so popular in the late medieval period.\textsuperscript{102} Caroline Barron has recently expanded upon Scott’s work to establish the existence of a robust network of book ownership and exchange among the merchant classes of London. Whereas fourteenth-century book ownership was mostly confined to members of the wealthiest trades—Mercers, Grocers, and Drapers—by the fifteenth century she points out that “we begin to find Londoners below the aldermanic class owning substantial collections of books, or small private libraries.” John Brynchele, a tailor, bequeathed two copies of Boethius’s \textit{Consolation of Philosophy} (one in English and one in Latin), another unnamed volume in English, and his copy of the “Talys of Cauterbury” to other tailors when drawing up his will in 1420. Nicholas Hotot, a woolmonger, bequeathed copies of the \textit{Brut} chronicle, \textit{The Prick of Conscience}, the \textit{Speculum Humanae Salvationis}, and an English primer upon his death in 1404.\textsuperscript{103} These manuscripts likely reflected the work of London-based book artists who thrived within this “lower end” of the book market, creating manuscripts for these

\textsuperscript{102} Scott, “Past Ownership: Evidence of Book Ownership by English Merchants in the Later Middle Ages.”

middling readers.\textsuperscript{104} By contrast, the \textit{de luxe} manuscripts collected by English nobility most often originated in the workshops of the Low Countries, France, Germany, or Italy.\textsuperscript{105}

Within even this small sample of books bequeathed by London merchants, it is easy to see that religious books were by far the most popular manuscript genre among late medieval book owners. Indeed, Susan Hagen Cavanaugh found that at least half of the manuscripts mentioned in the wills and inventories of late medieval individuals were liturgical or devotional in nature. Religious books no doubt \textit{were} the most popular genre of manuscript in late medieval England, but the absence of vernacular books in testamentary evidence should not be read as an indication of their scarcity. Devotional and liturgical books were mentioned by name in wills because testators frequently included them in bequests to churches and religious orders as compensation for prayers for their souls. It is likely, therefore, that vernacular books are underrepresented in bequests.\textsuperscript{106} Moreover, in numerous instances testators would bequeath “‘all my books’ or ‘the remainder of my books’” without specifying which books these were, or how many. Inventories of household goods do typically provide more comprehensive evidence of book ownership and attest to late medieval readers’ interests in vernacular

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{104} Meale, “Patrons, Buyers and Owners: Book Production and Social Status,” 201.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Harris gives a long list of manuscripts acquired by English nobility on their travels throughout Europe in the fifteenth century; see “Patrons, Buyers and Owners: The Evidence for Ownership and the Rôle of Book Owners in Book Production and the Book Trade,” 180–1. Edward IV’s library was “acquired wholesale from Flemish workshops” and Henry VII extended his library through continental commissions; see Meale, “Patrons, Buyers and Owners: Book Production and Social Status,” 203.
\end{itemize}
literature, but scribes rarely took the time to record every entry within a manuscript—a practice that is particularly frustrating for scholars attempting to document the circulation of certain texts in a culture where it was common for numerous verses, prose entries, recipes, or treatises to coexist within a single volume, sometimes in seemingly random compilations.107

Tracing the owners of practical manuscripts through bequests or inventories is only one means of understanding how late medieval readers interacted with books. Often manuscripts circulated among friends and family, were sold and resold on the secondhand market, and were sometimes actively used for centuries after their composition.108 Sometimes reader marks and annotations reveal portions of a manuscript’s journey from its creation through the hands of numerous readers, but in nearly all cases, gaps persist within the record.109 By the late fifteenth-century, readers would have had access to books in libraries as well, sometimes at great monastic institutions, but more often at their local parish churches. In London, several of the guilds

109 For much more on the reader marks found in practical manuscripts, see Chapter 4. William Sherman gives a thorough explanation of how early modern readers were taught to mark up their books in Used Books, 3–25.
established libraries for their members, and around 1425, a “common library” was constructed alongside the Guildhall for those in the merchant classes.¹¹⁰

But accounting for all of the people who might have owned, borrowed, or exchanged manuscripts still does not fully apprehend all of those within the orbit of “literate culture” in late medieval England. Charters were frequently read aloud in local courts, and occasionally, in smaller gatherings of friends and family. Their script-like language (“Be it known to all present and future people…”) encouraged the oral performance of documentary evidence, a practice that brought even the illiterate into contact with legal parlance and the formalities of written record-keeping and exchange.¹¹¹ Priests recounted morality tales and fables in their sermons; saints’ lives were told to children as a way to inspire their Christian education; and verses and songs were sung by traveling minstrels throughout England.¹¹² In her study of vernacular verse with its recurrent invocations to “listeners,” Ruth Crosby demonstrated that “the mass of [medieval] people obtained their knowledge of literature through hearing others read or recite rather than through reading to themselves.”¹¹³ Further, Joyce Coleman has made the credible case that even elite and highly literate late medieval men and women frequently chose to listen to rather than read their own books. She points out that reading aloud promoted practices of sociability that “did not vanish with the orality of minstrel

performances in hall.”¹¹⁴ No wonder compilers of practical books could breezily allude to Aristotle or Pythagoras without evidence of their knowing any Latin or Greek, or indeed of having read any of their works in translation. Snippets of such authoritative texts circulated freely—albeit often piecemeal—within a society that valued communal reading practices, where social circumstances frequently called for the literate few to read to their neighbors, family members, and friends.

Having learned about changes to manuscript production and increasing book ownership among the middling sort, it is now time to address the question of what exactly these changes to fifteenth-century book culture have to do with the proliferation of vernacular, practical manuscripts. The answer, of course, is that the literate culture of fifteenth-century England directly shaped the production and circulation of practical texts. As I noted in the previous section, efforts to translate Anglo-Norman and Latin practical texts into English originated with the elites and monastic orders, but because of the desire among middling readers to own manuscripts like their betters, Middle English practical texts quickly spread to a wide range of readers in a wide range of books. Some, like the pictorial almanacs and a few of the recipe books that will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, were created by trained scribes and decorated to serve as status objects as well as instructional books. But many others represent a new development within medieval book culture: a trend among the laity to create and own books that were informational rather than decorative, useful rather than ornamental.

The creation of unadorned, miscellaneous compilations of practical knowledge by amateur scribes—what Curt Bühler called the “every man his own scribe movement”—was only possible in the fifteenth century because of the presence of cheaper book-making materials and knowledge of faster writing scripts.\(^\text{115}\) No longer did an ambitious writer order expensive vellum from a parchminer. Instead, he could procure an ample supply of paper at a fraction of the price. The “commonplace” books of Robert Reynes and John Colyns,\(^\text{116}\) the “notebook” of John Crophill,\(^\text{117}\) the “dyueris tales and balettes and dyueris Reconynges” of Richard Hill,\(^\text{118}\) and the practical books of John Reed and Sir Thomas James\(^\text{119}\)—each cited by book historians and literary scholars as evidence of late medieval and early Tudor book culture—were all composed between the mid-fifteenth and first quarter of the sixteenth century on small notebooks of paper. Literacy was a professional requirement for London merchants John Colyns (Mercer) and Richard Hill (Grocer), and London offered plenty of opportunities to purchase blank quires of paper. For men like John Crophill, bailiff of Wix Priory in Essex, or Robert Reynes, reeve of the village of Acle in Norfolk, both of whom had been trained to read and write to keep records, book ownership only cost them the price of their writing support. And by the early sixteenth century, even rural vicars John Reed of Leicestershire and Thomas James of Worcestershire had access to quires of paper and used them to record medical recipes. In all of these instances, these “scribes” were literate, middling men who created personal

\(^{115}\) Bühler, *The Fifteenth-Century Book: The Scribes, the Printers, the Decorators*, 22–3.

\(^{116}\) Bodleian MS Tanner 407 and BL Harley MS 2252, respectively.

\(^{117}\) BL Harley MS 1735, ff. 36v–52v.

\(^{118}\) Balliol MS 354, Balliol College, Oxford.

\(^{119}\) Bodleian MS Rawlinson A.393 and BL Additional MS 21431, respectively.
books, the contents of which might be determined by whatever texts were available for copying combined with other bits of personal or family knowledge.

These “amateur” books might look different from professionally-copied manuscripts, or, they might not. The well-known London scribe and book artisan, John Shirley (c. 1366–1456), circulated unadorned, crudely rubricated, and oddly bound manuscripts that, in Julia Boffey’s words, have “little about their appearance to distinguish them from obviously amateur compilations, and it is merely the range, habit, and associations of the scribe which brand them as commercial enterprises.”

Distinctions between “professional” books and “homemade” books were further blurred by the late-medieval habit of binding amateur and professionally-copied booklets within a single manuscript. It appears that in the construction of his “medical book,” John Crophill hired a professional scribe to copy medical texts into one paper notebook, used another paper notebook for his own record keeping, and combined these with still another “booklet” of parchment containing astrological prognostications and cooking recipes.

The parchment booklet contains a few historiated initials, some rubrication, and a few simple penwork borders, but it is not elaborately produced, nor is the script particularly formal. The paper booklet with the professional copy is in a neat late-fifteenth century cursive script, but the major distinction between the professional copy and Crophill’s own notes on the last paper booklet is that the professional scribe was able to keep his work in straight lines. There is no rubrication or illustration in either paper booklet.

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120 Boffey and Thompson, “Anthologies and Miscellanies: Production and Choice of Texts,” 287.
121 BL Harley 1735, ff. 29r–36v, 36v–52r, and 1r–28v, respectively.
My point here is to demonstrate that in the late-fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, before print took hold of the market, scribal materials often circulated with homemade books in ways that trouble our scholarly predispositions toward labeling personal, handwritten books as “commonplace” books, in opposition to professionally copied or printed books. Of course these homemade books of the fifteenth century would evolve into the well-known commonplace books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, wherein readers would jot down interesting phrases or useful information from printed books, political tracts, religious pamphlets, or even from local gossip. But early modern commonplace books are by definition books of excerpts typically compiled by a single owner; they exist in opposition to a body of knowledge that is presumed to be whole and accessible to a general reader. To my mind, late medieval and early Tudor practical, vernacular manuscripts do not seem to presume the presence of an easily referenced body of knowledge from which texts may be excerpted, nor are they often the work of a single reader-producer. In many if not most cases, late medieval practical vernacular manuscripts were composite collections that grew over time, sometimes over a century or more, as readers encountered new and useful information and for the first time had a means to record this information.

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124 Boffey cites, in particular, the Brome manuscript (Beinecke MS 365), which has been dubbed a “commonplace book” but was actually the product of two different scribes; see
The personal manuscripts listed above have become duly famous because modern scholars can tie them definitively to a single reader, and thus, we are able to deduce elements of late medieval culture, personal interest, and reading practice from the books themselves. But can we, with any confidence, draw sharp distinctions between the books produced by these “amateur scribes” and professional copyists? How does one draw a distinction between a “miscellany” sprinkled with personal information but comprised of several different units—like John Crophill’s medical book—and a “personal compilation” like Robert Reynes’s—perhaps more miscellaneous in content than Crophill’s book but composed by a single reader-producer? The difficulty of arriving at satisfying definitions for these books highlights how just how open book production was by the late medieval period.

Whether miscellanies or commonplace books, remedy collections or leechbooks, almanacs or kalendars, the variety of terminology used to describe these useful compositions underscores the variety of information found within these manuscripts. And, over the course of the fifteenth century, England experienced an explosion in the creation and circulation of these manuscripts, though the exact figures to substantiate this explosion are impossible to establish because so very many practical manuscripts survive. To illustrate this point: George Keiser identified 558 different Middle English texts having to do with science or information for volume ten of the Manual of Writings in

125 Meale argues that “it is, above all, the imprint of the personal which differentiates the personal compilation from other ‘hold-all’ collections—collections which, for want of a better term, literary historians have labelled miscellanies”; see “Amateur Book Production and the Miscellany in Late Medieval East Anglia: Tanner 407 and Beinecke 365,” 159.
Middle English. The main function of the volume is its bibliography, which lists published works on these texts and gives the manuscript witnesses cited in publications. In other words, unedited or unpublished manuscript witnesses do not appear within that volume. Even so, the bibliography runs to over 200 pages of double columns in tiny font.126 Rossell Hope Robbins lists 355 Middle English medical manuscripts in the notes to his article on the topic—an inexhaustive list—and speculates that there were probably around six times as many vernacular medical manuscripts in fifteenth-century England as there had been in fourteenth-century England.127 Yet even these high numbers of surviving practical manuscripts are but a small fraction of what originally circulated in medieval England. Larger and more beautiful manuscripts were more likely to be preserved by readers for their intrinsic value over their cheaper, more workaday cousins. Practical vernacular books did escape the purges of religious manuscript collections brought on by the Reformation, but even so, they may often have been “read to pieces” due to their popularity and usefulness.128

The hundreds of these manuscripts that do survive from fifteenth-century England are vividly representative of this brief period in English culture when the definition of what a “book” was—its content, how it could be produced, by whom, and for what purpose—was fluid, mutable, open to adaptation. They represent widening access to book

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126 Keiser, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500.
127 Robbins, “Medical Manuscripts in Middle English.”
128 Harris, “Patrons, Buyers and Owners: The Evidence for Ownership and the Rôle of Book Owners in Book Production and the Book Trade,” 166–7. Harris cites the IMEV editor’s comments regarding the survival of manuscripts containing Middle English verse: “it is really long books that are found in the largest number of MSS” possibly because “small MSS may have been destroyed because of much use,” in Carleton Brown, The Index of Middle English Verse (Printed for the Index Society by Columbia University Press, 1943), xi, 737–9.
ownership and an awareness on the part of English people that a book might do more in their daily lives than teach them how to pray. They illustrate that even before the press came to England, the English were already familiar with the power of the written word within their daily lives and were ready and able to adapt to new ways of reading, knowing, and writing in the age of print.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how practical, vernacular books evolved from earlier medieval developments, foremost among them, the rise of pragmatic literacy as an offshoot of bureaucratic growth and the rise of personal book ownership in response to religious reform. I have explored the development of vernacular writing in England to underscore how the shift from Latin not only opened up a world of books and writing to the unlearned, it fundamentally challenged hierarchies of knowledge. I traced the growth of educational institutions intended for those below the highest ranks of society and outside the control of the church. The late medieval period saw the first attempts to control the dissemination of knowledge in the vernacular, even as those in power recognized the advantages of circulating “official” policies or doctrine in a language more accessible to the English people. New opportunities for education, rising literacy rates, robust use of the vernacular, and the growth of the middling classes, particularly in urban enclaves, all led to an increase in book ownership among late medieval English readers. Not surprisingly, England’s book producers responded to a growing reading public through organization and changes to book production, while the introduction and
adoption of faster scripts and cheaper book materials made book ownership even more accessible.

Fifteenth-century practical, vernacular books emerged from an older medieval tradition wherein book production was limited by both the demands of learning to read or write a strictly “textualized” language and by the expense of materials. These late medieval manuscripts were then displaced by an emerging print culture wherein a book came to be understood as a mechanically-printed object whose producers were those with expertise and access to specialized equipment. Nestled between these two cultural bookends, practical vernacular manuscripts offer a window into a short-lived period when a creative, experimental, and active reading public defined for themselves how books might be used for access to knowledge, to transmit instruction, for personal gain, and for record-keeping. Through attention to these books in case studies throughout the rest of this dissertation, I will highlight elements of this open and creative book culture and explore how it shifted in response to print—how some elements remained to enliven the print market and entice greater numbers of readers to open a book, whereas other elements were discarded out of necessity, as print prescribed what a book looked like, where it came from, and how it functioned. That gradual transformation will be the focus of the following three chapters, each of which takes an element of the function of vernacular practical books—reading, knowing, and writing—to explore what practical, vernacular books offered a “reading public,” both in manuscript and in print.
Midway through a mid-sixteenth century manuscript miscellany, nestled between pages of recipes, prognostications, herbal entries, and other remedies, are a series of sketches: bodiless heads spitting flames, hands holding swords, a corpse wrapped in a shroud, and stalks of wheat or barley. Above each of these illustrations is a caption: “Greate war,” “deathe of beaste,” “littell hony,” “greate fluddes of snowe” (fig. 2.1). To the left-hand side of the page, in landscape orientation rather than portrait, are the letters A, B, and C, written in an ornate, gothic style. On the verso of this page are still more letters, D, E, F, and G, with accompanying text rather than pictures, followed by the explicit: “Here endyth Sturgis booke of chypsn[?].” An abbreviation mark above the s and n in the final word indicates a missing vowel that cannot now be guessed.

Figure 2.1: Annual prognostications by dominical letter, Bodleian MS Add C. 246, f. 73r.
The hand that made these sketches probably belonged to George Walker, a gentleman born in East Farndon, Northamptonshire, sometime in the 1530s, probably around the same time the manuscript was created. On another leaf of this thick, bifolio-sized manuscript, Walker copied out a treatise on “The cummadimentes that a wise man taught his sunne,” under which he added his signature and guarantee: “Provid: On trewthe of ye same Amen quod George Walker senissimus of Este Farnedowne.” In addition to these “cummandimentes” and the rough sketches mid-way through the book, Walker’s miscellany contains entries typical of practical manuscripts: medical recipes, a dietary, directions to aid reproduction, instructions for ink and color-making, an herbal, a treatise against the pestilence, and written prognostications, as well as some personal record-keeping.

The sketches that Walker attempted on folio 73r are unlike anything else within the manuscript, however. I say “attempted” because the sketches are incomplete. They cover only the first half of a set of pictorial prognostications based on the year’s dominical letter, or the day upon which New Year’s falls. The dominical year, lettered A

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1 The catalogue entry for Bodleian MS Add. C.246 dates the composition to the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Several pleadings before the Chancery courts illustrate the Walker family’s consolidation of land in Farndon and neighboring Harborough, Northamptonshire, over the course of the sixteenth century. The earliest pleading to record George Walker as a defendant dates to 1557 (TNA C 1/1475/5–9), but also names his father, Rowland Walker as co-defendant. Assuming George Walker had reached his majority by 1557 in order to inherit property, that would put his birth sometime in the 1530s. The latest pleading to mention the elder George Walker, a suit brought against him by his son, dates to between 1591 and 1596 (TNA C 3/252/66).

2 Bodleian MS Add. C. 246, f. 3r.

3 Personal records of the Walker family are on ff. 2v–3r; reproductive recipes, f. 33r; recipes for colors and inks, ff. 33v–36r; the plague treatise, ff. 40r–42r; the dietary, ff. 43v–47r and 101r–101v; the herbal, ff. 61r–72r, and 94v–100v; the written prognostications, ff. 102v–103v.
to G, was determined according to the first Sunday of the ecumenical year which began on January 1. In the sketches in MS Add. C. 246, Walker copied the icons, images, and symbols indicating crop yields, plagues, wars, and weather events for dominical years A through C, but then switched to prose for years D through G, copying out the remainder of this prognostication on the verso of the folio pictured in figure 2.1. If writing the prognostication was easier for Walker than drawing it out, as this truncated pictorial version suggests that it was, why did Walker begin with pictures? Extant chancery records and other entries in MS Add. C. 246 confirm that he was a highly literate man, able to both read and write. Why attempt to render the prognostication in pictures when words would suffice?

Of course we cannot know for certain what George Walker was thinking as he made those sketches, but perhaps the best explanation for his rough sketches is this: Walker drew these prognostications because they had always been drawn this way, for as long as he could remember. By the time Walker added them to his practical book in the mid-sixteenth century, this exact series of icons and symbols had been circulating among English readers in almanacs and calendars for at least 150 years. Walker drew this prognostication because it was traditional to do so.

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4 For years in which January 1 is a Sunday, the dominical letter for the year would be A. If January 1 were a Monday, the dominical letter would be B, and so on, through G, when the seven-year cycle repeats. Even in England where the civil calendar recognized a New Year’s date of March 25, the dominical letter was always determined from January 1 because the letter was important for calculating moveable feasts throughout the liturgical year, especially the date of Easter.

5 In addition to the partially written prognostication on f. 73v, MS Add. C. 246 contains a full textual version of the prognostications from New Year’s Day on ff. 102v–103v.
In Chapter 1, I argued that a series of cultural, material, social, and economic developments fostered the growth of an innovative and creative book culture in fifteenth-century England. In this chapter, I will explore how this creative manuscript culture manifested itself in unusual book objects, and specifically, in practical books comprised of icons, images, and numbers that presuppose a very fluid definition of the act of “reading.” Nearly all of these pictorial practical manuscripts fall into at least one of three genres: the almanac, the calendar, or the prognostication. These genres have one defining feature in common. They are all cyclical in nature, dependent on the predictable movements of the earth, sun, moon, and planets, and as such, each lends itself to conveyance through icons rather than text. But the cyclical nature of these genres only explains how iconographic representation was possible—not why. To understand why late medieval scribes and limners put such effort into creating meaningful pictures when words might suffice, this chapter will situate pictorial practical manuscripts within a tradition of iconography most often associated with religious texts. I will argue that these books emerged from a late medieval devotional culture that insisted, in no uncertain terms, that images could be read.

In the sixth century, Pope Gregory I wrote that in images “the ignorant may see that which they ought to follow, in them they read the letters they do not know: whence a picture is chiefly for reading by the people.” These famous lines emerged as a defense of

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the Christian practice of depicting the saints, the Apostles, Mary, and Christ in artwork, despite the Biblical commandment against graven images. In the centuries that followed, Gregory’s words became foundational principles and they were trotted out frequently by medieval churchmen to defend religious art, though there was not always consensus about the extent to which the “illiterate” could really “read” pictures. Great thinkers like Bonaventure (1221–74) and Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) went so far as to elaborate a tripartite justification for the use of images within religious practice, one tenet of which was their function to “instruct the illiterate, who may be taught from images just as from books.” By the fifteenth-century, this tenet of Christian practice had become so widely accepted that it was reiterated in vernacular devotional works. The widely popular English prose treatise on the Ten Commandments, *Diues & pauper*, repeats the trifold justification of Aquinas and Bonaventure, concluding that images “be ordeyned to be a token and a booke to the lewde people that they may rede in ymagerye and paynture that clerkes rede in the booke as the lawe sayth.”

The introduction of the hand press to England in 1476 brought greater opportunities for images to act “as books for the unlearned.” Over the first few decades of

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7 For an excellent overview of the many Western medieval Christian thinkers who quoted Gregory’s stance on images, see Lawrence G. Duggan, “Was Art Really the ‘Book of the Illiterate’?,” *Word and Image* 5, no. 3 (January 1989): 227–51.


9 *Diues & pauper*, STC 19213, EEBO (Westminster: Wynkyn de Worde, 1496), The firste commaundement, Capitulum I.
the sixteenth century, single-sheet xylographic (or woodcut-printed) icons, were treasured by English readers,\textsuperscript{10} and printers began to experiment with interspersing woodcut illustrations into otherwise textual works.\textsuperscript{11} A single woodblock could produce upwards of four thousand copies before wearing out and thus had the potential to make already widely-legible visual motifs far more available to the masses.\textsuperscript{12} However, as I will demonstrate in the final section of this chapter, English printers were heavily dependent on continental woodcutting and artistry and, as a result, much that was specifically English about the pictorial practical books of the fifteenth century—namely, a program of non-religious iconography—failed to appear in print. Though secular iconography represents only a fraction of the illustration in late medieval manuscripts, I will argue that the collapse of this iconography following the introduction of the press has broader implications for our understanding of the impact of print and of the relative success of iconoclastic policies in the turbulent years of the mid-sixteenth century.

This chapter is not explicitly about the English Reformation, but one cannot easily extricate a history of “reading images” from a history of religious practice, in no small part because the original elaboration of the practice came from the church itself. From

\textsuperscript{10} For example, the printed single-sheet indulgence with an iconographic “Image of Pity” survives in twenty-seven copies (STC nos. 14077c.6–23B), which may in fact represent hundreds if not thousands of printed copies that are now lost. See Tessa Watt’s discussion of these icons in Watt, \textit{Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640}, 131–33; see also, Edward Hodnett, \textit{English Woodcuts, 1480–1535} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), nos. 350, 381, 390, 454, 459, 568, 1374, 2016, 2024, 2380, 2039, 2062, and 2498; Edward Hodnett, \textit{English Woodcuts, 1480–1535: Additions & Corrections} (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1973), nos. 2507, 2508, and 2513.


Robert Scribner’s study of Lutheran propaganda in Germany to Eamon Duffy’s exploration of Edwardian iconoclasm, most notable studies of the transition from late medieval to early modern imagery have been cast within a decidedly confessional binary (Catholic against Protestant).\(^\text{13}\) Even within studies that have sought to correct this binary view—most notably Tessa Watt’s investigation into popular English Protestant print—analysis of the practice of “reading” images often takes a backseat to analysis of the persuasive power of a particular doctrine or the extent of popular belief.\(^\text{14}\) By examining pictures and manuscripts that were not always expressly related to religion, this chapter will argue that within late medieval and early modern England, cultural appreciation for the value of “reading images” extended beyond the confines of devotional practice and contributed to the development of a creative English manuscript culture wherein a book might be a repository of texts or images or both. Instead of looking for ruptures in systems of belief, this chapter will follow gradual changes to the way English men and women understood their ability to “read” images outside the exercise of devotion, and in turn, explore how the conventions of the printed book and the technological limitations of the press contributed to the collapse of a deeply ingrained cultural practice.

I. From devotion to instruction: the origins of the practical picture book

Sometime between January of 1428 and February of 1431, Richard Skires, a customs agent at the port of King’s Lynn, Norfolk, uncovered a saltwater-damaged shipment of a half dozen writing tablets, twelve pencases, twelve inkhorns, needles,


\(^{14}\) Watt, Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640, 131–255.
curtain rings, glass for spectacles, and twelve “lewdecalendars,” among other items of “hardeware” and “haberdasherrie.”¹⁵ As was his job, Skires made note of all these items in the customs log, giving estimates of their value so as to reckon the appropriate tariffs due to the English crown. According to Skires’s estimation, none of these items was very expensive, perhaps owing to the damage incurred by the saltwater. If not for the inclusion of items described as “lewdecalendars” in his inventory, this customs entry would probably draw little attention. Yet among needles, pens, and tablets, this peculiar notation of a dozen “lewdecalendars” begs for further analysis. Just what were they?

First, the etymology of the term “lewde” helps to clarify that these were not scandalous artifacts akin to modern pin-ups. In Middle English, the term “lewde” meant “unlearned” rather than “crass” or “uncouth.” Skires’s use of the term “lewde” to describe a shipment of a dozen calendars suggests that these artifacts probably had some unusual format or characteristic that would have made them more accessible to the unlearned.¹⁶ As we have seen, medieval culture was saturated with pronouncements about the instructive role of images and pictures for these “unlearned.” Indeed, the fifteenth-century English devotional text *Diues & pauper* uses the term “lewde” when justifying Christian imagery, calling images “a booke to the lewde people that they may rede in ymagerye and paynture.”¹⁷ On the basis of this lexical evidence, Pamela Robinson has made a very strong case that the “lewdecalendars” described by Skires were probably

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¹⁷ *Diues & pauper*, First commaundement, Capitulum I.
pictorial calendars very similar to two exemplars now held in the British and Bodleian libraries, Additional MS 70517 (fig. 2.2) and MS Douce 71, respectively. These two nearly identical manuscripts, both composed on a single strip of vellum designed to fold lengthwise and then accordion-style to form a small square, use icons and images to convey the order of saints’ days and the rhythms of the agricultural and astrological year. Such calendars were critical tools in late medieval Europe where the patterns of life—from collecting rents to dating legal documents to planning one’s diet—revolved around the church’s calendar.

Figure 2.2: BL Additional MS 70517, top verso (left) and top recto (right). The feast days for January–April are depicted via images of the saints (left) and labors of the month are depicted next to a circular diagram illustrating the hours of daylight and nighttime and the zodiac sign for January–April (right).

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18 Robinson, “‘Lewdecalendars’ from Lynn,” 221–2.
19 See Appendix A for a table listing the size, format, and general contents of all of the pictorial manuscripts discussed in this chapter.
On the recto side of both manuscripts (fig. 2.2, right), square segments on the left-hand side of the strip depict images of a man at work at various agricultural tasks appropriate to that month, and squares to the right contain a little circular diagram showing the hours of daylight for each month. In the Additional calendar (fig. 2.2, right), zodiac signs accompany each diagram of daylight hours. On the verso of both manuscripts (fig. 2.2, left) is a perpetual liturgical calendar, or a visual depiction of the numerous saints’ days celebrated throughout with church year. Little bust-sized images of the saints (or their icons) are captioned by names in abbreviated Latin. The bottom four sections (not pictured) of the verso side of both manuscripts give notations of the years that have passed since events in the Old and New Testament, also indicated via icons: the years since the world’s creation (a T-shaped map of the world), the ages of both Adam and Eve (busts of the two figures), the time elapsed since the great flood (a floating ship), and since Christ’s birth (in the Additional calendar, 1412, and in the Douce calendar, 1432). In the Additional manuscript, the top four sections of the verso contain an abbreviated table of dominical letters giving the dates of Easter for several hundred years in the future, and the bottom two folded sections on the recto contain a crude chart of prognostications, with symbols indicating lucky and unlucky days within the thirty-day lunar cycle.

One can see in figure 2.2, above, that these calendars were not lavishly produced. Though they are illustrated, the figures are roughly sketched in black ink and then colored with red, blue, and green washes. Crude as they are, however, these two calendars draw on a rich array of iconography established from the habits and cycles of Christian devotion. By the fifteenth century, the faithful had developed a highly
sophisticated visual acuity as devotion had become almost synonymous with “seeing” the saints, Mary, Christ, and his Apostles.\(^{20}\) These simple, pictorial liturgical calendars operated through reference to these commonly legible religious motifs. For example, in figure 2.2 above, the Annunciation of the Virgin is indicated by the Angel of the Lord presenting Mary with a flower, and the feast of St. Mark the Evangelist is indicated by a lion, the icon for St. Mark, and a scroll, representing his role in writing the gospels.

The “labors of the months” and zodiac illustrations on the recto of these calendars were also part of the litany of religious visual material used to decorate both devotional manuscripts and the walls and windows of medieval churches. These agricultural and astrological motifs appear in many Books of Hours and Psalters, as pictorial representations of the cycle of seasons and order of the agricultural year.\(^{21}\) The expensively illustrated “Bedford Hours” once owned by the French royal family contains both the “labors of the month” and zodiac iconography in its liturgical calendar, indicating the widespread currency of these motifs which were not confined to “lewde” manuscripts alone.\(^{22}\) Though not as common in church decoration as in devotional manuscripts, occasionally these agricultural and astrological motifs can also be found on English baptismal fonts and in stained glass.\(^{23}\)

\(^{20}\) See Scribner’s discussion of the “sacramental gaze” and seeing as worship in Religion and Culture in Germany: (1400 - 1800), ed. Lyndal Roper (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 114–7; For the Sake of Simple Folk, 4.


\(^{23}\) An early twelfth-century baptismal font at the Church of St. Mary, Burnham Deepdale, Norfolk, is ornamented with figures depicting the labors of the month, as is another mid-thirteenth century cast-lead baptismal font at St. Augustine’s Church, Brookland, Kent,
Because these visual motifs structured the rhythms of devotional practice and the passage of time all over Europe, indeed everywhere that the church in Rome held sway, it is perhaps not surprising that “lewdecalendars” like BL Additional MS 70517 and Bodleian MS Douce 71 can be found in libraries and archives elsewhere in Europe. The Staatsbibliothek in Berlin holds a late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century pictorial liturgical calendar with an identical physical format to the Additional and Douce calendars and nearly identical pictorial motifs, though its saints’ names are in German rather than Latin.24 The National and University Library in Llubljana, Slovenia holds another of these pictorial calendars, this one dated to 1415, and it is close to a perfect match to the Douce and British Library exemplars, though it is more finely colored with some gilding.25 Finally, the Royal Library of Denmark holds yet another exemplar extremely similar to the Additional and Douce calendars, though it postdates those two calendars by a century and features Danish runes in a table of Easter dates.26 Given that all five pictorial liturgical calendars follow the same physical layout and format, it seems probable that they are distantly related to one another through an original, common exemplar. Each of these manuscripts employs simple iconographic elements—elements

which features decoration depicting the labors of the month and zodiac signs. See photos at http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/burnhamdeepdale/burnhamdeepdale.htm and http://greatenglishchurches.co.uk/html/brookland.html. Stained glass roundels featuring the labors of the month were taken from the fifteenth-century parsonage at St Michael-at-Colasny, Norwich and are now held at the Victoria and Albert Museum (c.133-1931; C.134-1931; C.135-1931), and can be viewed at http://collections.vam.ac.uk.


used in baptismal fonts, stained glass, and other more sophisticated devotional manuscripts—and each repurposes that legible imagery into a medium both useful and accessible. Because the German calendar features vernacular German titles, and the Danish calendar features Danish runes, it is clear that both were created in the region within which they are now preserved. But what of the other three in Latin—the Additional, Douce, and Slovenian exemplars—that are close to identical? Are these evidence of pictorial manuscript production in England?

Upon close examination, there is one identifying feature common to the three Latinate pictorial manuscripts that places these calendars not in an English stationer’s shop, nor in a Balkan one, but rather in the manuscript workshops of the Low Countries: their inclusion of the feast of St. Bavo on October 1. Bavo, a seventh-century Frankish noble, was patron saint of the town of Haarlem, now in the Netherlands, and of the towns of Ghent, Zellik, and Lauwe, now in Belgium. This by itself is considerable evidence of a Netherlandish or Flemish origin for all three calendars, but the case is made even stronger when put in the context of the larger enterprise of manuscript importation in fifteenth-century England. By the fifteenth century, numerous workshops in Flanders and in France were engaged in producing manuscripts on speculation for English buyers—especially illustrated and formulaic religious devotional manuscripts like Books of Hours and calendars. There are upwards of 200 surviving examples of Books of Hours for England created in continental—mainly Flemish—workshops, and late medieval English customs rolls record shipments of dozens of Latinate liturgical calendars from

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Add to this evidence the brief customs notation from Richard Skires about “lewdecalendars” confiscated at King’s Lynn from a “certain alien merchant” and a Flemish one another branch within a larger pattern of manuscript production and exportation from the workshops of the Low Countries to the libraries of readers in England and beyond.29

Yet even though the idea of a simple and useful pictorial manuscript did not originate in England, it was English scribes and readers who would expand upon this pan-European visual tradition. Drawing from the format and presentation of religious iconography in pictorial liturgical calendars, English scribes began to create pictorial almanacs and prognostications unique to England. Immersed in a culture that emphasized the instructive power of religious imagery, English scribes found creative ways to translate centuries-old prognostications, elements from English history, and complex astrological knowledge into icons and illustrations that would appear in manuscripts throughout the fifteenth century.

The very earliest of these English pictorial manuscripts provides a kind of blueprint for this process: in its contents and format we see a religious tradition of illustration inspiring a new visual language of pragmatic and non-religious iconography. Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson D. 939, dateable to 1389, appears to have been created

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for an individual whose profession required him to merge the rhythms of a religious life with the commercial and agricultural necessities of life on a working manor. This manuscript is another pictorial liturgical calendar, and like the five exemplars discussed above, it too was meant to fold up into a small square. Unlike those exemplars, however, this manuscript contains much more than an arrangement of saints’ days. Its contents fill six strips of parchment rather than just one. And, fortunately for the historian, it also contains identifying features to indicate where and for whom it was created.  

On what is now the cover of Rawlinson D.939, a full-length illustration of a man and his dog appears under the heading “Harry the Haywarde.” As haywarde, this “Harry” would have been the parish or manorial officer tasked with monitoring the fences or enclosures of the estate. He may also have had a role in collecting rents and overseeing the harvests. As such, he would have needed a good understanding of the rhythms of the agricultural year and the designated saints’ days when labor would be suspended—both subjects conveyed in a liturgical calendar. Another manorial worker, “Peris the Pyndar,” is also depicted in the manuscript, on folio 3v. Though Harry was given pride of place on what was once the cover of the calendar, Peris’s portrait appears to have formed one of the visible pages of the calendar when it was folded into booklet form; the rectangular section of parchment featuring Peris shows much more wear and tear than the rest of folio 3v.  

Finally, unlike the Flemish exemplars discussed above, Rawlinson D.939 features English saints, many of which were particularly revered in the region around

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30 A complete digitized facsimile of the manuscript is available at https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/eca53671-3a29-46ef-aace-3aa2b3b48195.

31 See Appendix A for a list of the formal characteristics of this and other pictorial manuscripts discussed in this chapter.
Worcester. On the basis of this evidence, John Friedman has suggested that the manuscript may have been created for manorial officers like Harry and Peris (who may themselves have been stock figures) working at Evesham Abbey, a very old Benedictine house on the river Avon southwest of Worcester.  

Though the images in the Rawlinson calendar are not particularly sophisticated, they are colored in several washes and are gilded in some places, suggesting that the manuscript was created by trained scribes and limners. Whoever commissioned its creation was clearly familiar with the format and structure of the “lewdecalendars” discussed above. The Rawlinson calendar is not a direct copy of those exemplars, but the design for the pictorial liturgical calendar on the second of the six leaves follows those calendars closely. The same folding pattern (lengthwise and then accordion-style) creates natural divisions for the months of the year, with the labors of the month and zodiac signs depicted on one side of the vellum, and illustrations of the saints in the perpetual calendar on the other side. Elsewhere in the Rawlinson calendar, in section 5v, pictorial representations of historical events follow the same order as those in the simple liturgical calendars discussed above, but in addition to Biblical events like the

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33 It is possible that those other pictorial calendars from Germany and Denmark somehow derive from the Rawlinson calendar, but I find no evidence to support that hypothesis short of a simple chronology that places the Rawlinson calendar before either of those continental exemplars. Further, because England was not a center for manuscript exportation in late medieval Europe and there is ample evidence of English patrons commissioning manuscripts from continental workshops, I think it more probable that continental liturgical calendars influenced the design of this first English pictorial manuscript.

34 Bodleian MS Rawlinson D.939, sections 2a and 2b (recto), and 2c (verso).
creation of the world, the Ark, and so on, the Rawlinson calendar also gives the years elapsed since important events in English history, including the death of Saint Augustine, the missionary sent to convert the Anglo-Saxons in the sixth century, and Saint Thomas Becket, murdered at the behest of King Henry II in 1170.

Leaving aside the portions of the Rawlinson manuscript that appear to derive from the pan-European pictorial liturgical calendar, the rest of the manuscript is a mix of images, icons, text, and numbers in a compilation of entries tailored to satisfy the needs of laborers on a monastic estate, working at the intersection of lay agricultural life and a life of religious practice. Around half of the manuscript’s contents are religious in nature. On the first leaf, in addition to the portrait of “Harry,” is an illustration of the Annunciation of the Virgin, the commemoration of the moment Mary was told that she would give birth to Jesus, which until the eighteenth century marked the first day of the calendar year in England. On folio 3v, above the illustration of “Peris the Pyndar,” is an illustration of St. Christopher carrying the Christ child across the river, accompanied by a Latin prayer to Christopher, the patron saint of travelers. This illustration within a small, portable manuscript may have served the same function as the St. Christopher badges worn by travellers today. There are many more religious illustrations: Christ on the throne of heaven; Christ as life and Satan as death; the angel of the Lord appearing before Adam and Eve; Adam and Eve’s ejection from Paradise; Cain’s murder of Abel; Adam’s death and descent into Hell; Christ’s resurrection and his plundering of Hell; the adoration of the Magi at the Nativity; and Mary and John the Evangelist at Christ’s crucifixion.\footnote{These illustrations run across the upper sections of folios 4r, 5r, and 6r.}
These several religious illustrations within the Rawlinson calendar mirror closely another program of religious imagery popular in late medieval Europe: the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, or *The Mirror of Human Salvation*.\(^{36}\) This immensely popular genre of illustrated devotional book was a visual depiction of the medieval concept of “typology,” the mode of Biblical interpretation that presumed all the events of the New Testament were prefigured or anticipated in some way by the events of the Old. On every page of a typical *Speculum* manuscript, two images, one from the Old and one from the New Testament, appear above two columns of Latin verse that explain the illustrations and their relationship to one another. In the *Speculum* tradition, this program of images was meant to inspire the reader to reflect on man’s sin and his redemption through illustrated scenes of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and through the life of Mary.\(^{37}\)

Of the 350 extant manuscripts containing the *Speculum*, nearly all follow the same order of illustration. This regularity among the *Speculum* manuscripts created a program of religious illustration that made meditation and reflection on Biblical events possible even without reference to the Latin verses that accompanied the images. Indeed, the prologue to the *Speculum humanae salvationis* was quite explicit that its illustrations

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\(^{36}\) Whereas I can only speculate about the continental origins of the pictorial liturgical calendars discussed above, we know that the *Speculum humanae salvationis* originated in German-speaking regions of Europe in the early fourteenth century. There is considerable debate over the original author of the *Speculum*, with various scholars proffering Conradus of Altzheim, Vincent of Beauvais, Henricus Suso, and Ludolphus of Saxony. There is agreement, however, on the date of the original manuscript: two early copies of the *Speculum* are dated 1324, and a mention of the papacy in Avignon dates the work to later than 1309. See, Adrian Wilson and Joyce Lancaster Wilson, *A Medieval Mirror: Speculum Humanae Salvationis 1324–1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 25–9.

were to serve exactly that purpose, explaining that “the learned can find information from the scriptures, but the unlearned must be taught by pictures, which are the books of lay people.”

Within a century of the *Speculum*’s appearance its imagery was appropriated for use in church decoration, on rood screens, sculptures, and stained glass in cathedrals and chapels across Europe. Repetition of these images beyond the pages of manuscripts served to reinforce their legibility, further increasing the likelihood that the laity might be “taught by pictures.”

The Rawlinson calendar’s illustrations linking the original sin of Adam and Eve in the Genesis story of the Old Testament to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ in the New Testament closely parallels the first two chapters of illustration within the *Speculum* tradition. Yet the Rawlinson calendar borrows only the illustrations from the *Speculum* tradition and none of the Latin verse that typically accompanied them. In doing so, the creator of the Rawlinson calendar seems to be indicating his intention to follow through on the *Speculum*’s directive that “the unlearned must be taught by pictures.” At the very least, the scribe seems to have been inspired by a culture of religious devotion that insisted such a thing was possible.

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38 Wilson and Wilson, 24. By the fifteenth-century, this prologue had been translated into French, English, Dutch, German, and Czech, in manuscript exemplars that span northern Europe.

39 Wilson and Wilson write that “the influence of the typological text and illustrations […] can be seen in the fourteenth-century stained glass of churches at Mulhouse, Colmar, Rouffach, and Wissembourg. The woodcuts of the blockbooks appear in designs of the fifteenth-century sculptures of the church of Saint-Maurice at Vienne and in the famous tapestries of the Life of Christ at La Chaise-Dieu and the series at Rheims. […] Jan Van Eyck, in 1440, worked from a *Speculum* in the triptych for the church of Saint-Martin in Ypres. […] On the exterior of the side panel is the earliest example, in panel painting, of the Annunciation to Augustus and the Tiburtine Sibyl just as it appears in the *Speculum.*” See, Wilson and Wilson, 28–9.
Perhaps this insistence was what spurred the development of the decidedly English—and decidedly non-religious—illustration and iconography that fills much of the remainder of the Rawlinson calendar. To my knowledge no earlier examples of this program of secular illustration survive from medieval England. As the oldest manuscript to contain iconographic prognostications, the Rawlinson calendar may in fact have been the model for all other pictorial practical manuscripts created for the remainder of the fifteenth century, and indirectly, for the pictorial prognostications sketched by George Walker in his sixteenth-century recipe book. The pictorial prognostication from the Rawlinson calendar in figure 2.3 below follows the same principles as those in Walker’s recipe book copied out more than a century later: dominical letters A through G are listed on the left-hand side of the page, with icons detailing the predictions for the weather, the harvest, and general mortality for each year of the seven-year dominical cycle extending in horizontal rows leading from each letter. Above each icon, an abbreviated Latin caption explains the image below.
In addition to this pictorial prognostication by dominical letter, several other pictorial prognostications can be found on other leaves of the Rawlinson calendar. Section 3r has a series of icons depicting monthly prognostications according to whether one hears thunder within that month, also accompanied by brief Latin captions. On the same leaf is a table of “nativities,” with planetary symbols—a sun, a moon, a black circle, and so on—depicting the planetary influence reigning in every hour of every day of the week. On the verso of this leaf, a circular diagram aids the reader in interpreting the table, indicating which icon stands for which planet. Finally, the most complex set of pictorial prognostications can be found on section 6v, wherein a table of icons conveys prognostications calculated by the lunar cycle. This pictorial *storia lunae* (fig. 2.4) gives the reader direction on which days are good for letting blood or beginning a journey; unlike the other prognostications in this manuscript, however, it does so without any textual explanation. Other pictorial or visual displays of useful but secular knowledge
within Bodleian MS Rawlinson D.939 are tables for calculating currency rates; tables for calculating the assize of bread; and a *homo signorum*, or zodiac man, illustrating which astrological signs influenced which parts of the body, accompanied by an iconographic table indicating the governing zodiac sign for every day of the year.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{40} Rawlinson D.939, sections 4v–5r.
Each of the pictorial prognostications within the Rawlinson calendar derives from texts that were already circulating widely in medieval England by the time the manuscript was created. The “book of thunders,” or monthly prognostications based on whether one hears thunder in a given month (section 3r), can be traced to Old English versions circulating in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Similar versions also circulated widely in Latin in Middle English. The same is true of the prognostications by dominical letter, which first appear in Old English in manuscripts from the eleventh- and twelfth-centuries. In its numerous Middle English versions, the prognostication describes “howe all þe yer is rewlyd be þe fyrste day of Janiwere,” giving the prognostications for Sunday through Saturday, rather than A through G. The *storia lunae* prognostication was perhaps most popular of all. Several different versions of this prognostication circulated in verse and prose in late medieval England, four examples of which will be discussed further in this chapter and in Chapter 3. This is all to say that the visual language developed by the Rawlinson scribe emerged from an already robust textual tradition.

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41 The Voigts-Kurtz index of *Scientific and Medical Writings in Old and Middle English* cites five Old English versions of “Prognostication, by thunder”: eVK2 nos. 0118.00; 0044.00; 0117.00; 0122.00; 0016.00.

42 Of the vernacular manuscripts surveyed for this dissertation, Middle English versions of the prognostication from thunder appear in Wellcome Library MS 8004, ff. 70r–70v, and in BL Sloane MS 2584, ff. 33r–33v. These same prognostications can be found in Latin in BL Egerton MS 1995, ff. 61v–62v; CUL MS Dd.6.29, ff. 2v–16r; Bodleian MSS Douce 45, ff. 112v–114v, and Tanner 407, ff. 53; and Wellcome MS 537, ff. 12v–13v.

43 The Voigts-Kurtz index of *Scientific and Medical Writings in Old and Middle English* cites two Old English versions of “prognostication, by New Year’s Day”: eVK2 nos. 0041.00 and 0170.00. Of the manuscripts viewed for this dissertation, these same prognostications in Middle English are found in BL MSS Harley 2252, ff. 141–42, and Sloane 393, ff. 73v–74v; Bodleian MS Add. C.246, ff. 102v–103v; and Wellcome MS 8004, ff. 68v–70r.

44 See my discussion of the verse *storia lunae* in BL Harley MS 1735, below, pp. 114–5, and discussion of the *storia lunae* in BL MSS Harley 2320, ff. 31–52r, and Sloane 1315, ff. 49–64, pp. 155–7. See also, Irma Taavitsainen, “Storia Lune and Its Paraphrase in
Yet instead of copying out these texts in either Latin or Middle English as the scribe certainly could have done, the creator of the Rawlinson calendar chose instead to reproduce the same information in pictures. Might this choice have been made because the scribe was creating a manuscript for someone with limited reading ability? The best evidence to support that hypothesis comes from the unusual system of numbering employed throughout the calendar. Rather than using Roman or Arabic numerals, the manuscript uses a unique system of dots, circles, half-circles, and bars, visible in figure 2.4, above, and similar to the system of numbering visible in fig. 2.2 in the “lewdecalendars” discussed at the opening of this section. Yet this evidence alone is not conclusive. Arabic numerals were relatively unusual in fourteenth-century England. The scribe’s choice of a numerical system akin to tally marks does not necessarily indicate illiteracy.

Moreover, there are several entries in the manuscript that suggest a reader who was quite literate, not only in Middle English, but also in Latin and French. Several entries are entirely in Latin, including directions for making a sundial and a prayer to St. Christopher, and the prognostications by dominical letter are captioned with Latin

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45 This is the argument made by Friedman in “Harry the Haywarde and Talbat His Dog: An Illustrated Girdle Book from Worcestershire,” 115.
46 In this numerical system, a bar represents one thousand, a star one hundred, a circle ten, a half circle five, and a dot, one unit.
headings.\textsuperscript{48} Other entries in Middle English prose include a description of the influences of the seven planets and a passage on “Moyses.”\textsuperscript{49} Finally, a table of figures for reckoning money by pound, shilling, and pence is headed by a brief explanation in French.\textsuperscript{50} If the user of the Rawlinson calendar was “unlettered,” it is difficult to explain the manuscript’s consistent reversion to textual clarification in multiple languages. In fact, the only pictorial entry without text in the entire manuscript is the table of lunar prognostications depicted in figure 2.4, above. Yet while this table does not rely on textual explication, it does presuppose a tremendous store of background knowledge in the reader. Without a prior knowledge of the details of the \textit{storia lunae} prognostication, the icons and images are no more legible to the uninitiated than Latin text would be to an uneducated fifteenth-century Englishman. Those icons could not be “read” unless the reader were trained to do so.

It is for this reason that modern scholars of literacy have refused to take seriously the medieval premise that pictures were like “books for the unlearned.” Lawrence Duggan and Michael Camille have argued that the interpretation of an image required too much contextual knowledge for any real act of “reading” to occur.\textsuperscript{51} Yet Duggan’s and Camille’s critiques are predicated on a modern definition of reading that privileges the extraction of new knowledge over reflection or contemplation. This kind of extractive reading is not the sort required by the cyclical and repetitive entries within the Rawlinson

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{48} Rawlinson D.939, section 5r and 3v.
\bibitem{49} Rawlinson D. 939, section 3v, 5r, and 4v.
\bibitem{50} Rawlinson D.939, section 5r.
\end{thebibliography}
calendar, nor indeed is it the sort of reading described by medieval authors. In the fifteenth-century English devotional work *Diues & pauper*, the Pauper tells his pupil to “rede in the boke of paynture” by reflecting on the crucifix, taking in the position of Christ’s head, arms, side, and feet, and “on this maner I praye the rede the book.”⁵² This description of an act of reading “the boke of paynture” might be characterized by modern critics as a manifestation of what art historian Michael Baxandall called the “period eye.” Baxandall describes a viewer’s encounter with particular images as a “visual experience” conditioned by “the knowledge he will use to supplement what his immediate vision gives him, and the attitude he will adopt to the kind of artificial object seen.”⁵³

Yet while this reflective and contemplative mode is particularly discernible in the act of “reading” an image, medieval thinkers were just as apt to describe reading a text in the same way. Mary Carruthers has argued that medieval reading was an exercise in calling to mind that which had already been committed to memory. For much of the medieval period reading was both an oral act, *lectio*, and a silent act, *meditatio*, and it was the second part of this process that might be done either by text or picture. If the act of reading made stories that were already internalized present again in one’s mind, then both letters and pictures could serve that function.⁵⁴

And yet, while the icons in the Rawlinson calendar’s prognostications do rely on contextual knowledge and reflection and so, in some ways, reflect the medieval modes of

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⁵² *Diues & pauper*, The fyrste commaundement, Capitulum II.
reading described by Carruthers or by the anonymous author of *Diues & pauper*, they are not employed in the same manner as an image of Christ on the cross or an icon of the St. Catherine wheel. Those religious icons both jogged the reader’s memory and encouraged him or her to reflect on suffering and redemption. Instead, the iconographic *storia lunae* is more akin to a visual language wherein the icons act as logograms that allow for the reader to perform more complex acts of interpretation. Indeed, as a genre, pictorial prognostications depend not just on the reader’s interpretation of icons and pictures, but also on his or her interpretation of weather, time, the phases of the moon, or the passing of the seasons. These acts of interpretation relied on the medieval understanding that reading could call to mind what one already knows, and that pictures could be read as a “book for the unlearned,” but pictorial prognostications then required that the reader seek out new information through observation, without which the prognostications would be ineffectual. As such, these prognostications merge two distinct concepts of reading—the one reflective, the other extractive—within an innovative genre of manuscript: the pictorial practical book.

II. Reading the “book of peynture” in fifteenth-century England

The Rawlinson calendar may have been the first pictorial practical manuscript created by English scribes but it would not be the last. Over the course of the fifteenth century, the English created more pictorial practical manuscripts, some of which, like the Rawlinson calendar, appear to merge the iconographic traditions of religious devotion with information useful for daily work. Where the Rawlinson calendar met the needs of agrarian workers like the haywarde or pinder pictured on its leaves, four other fifteenth-
century pictorial practical manuscripts appear to have been designed for use by another profession in medieval England: physicians. These four pictorial books are not merely calendars but rather almanacs, a distinction that depends on the inclusion of astrological data alongside the typical elements of a liturgical calendar: lunar and solar eclipses; the length of daylight throughout the year; the degree of the angle of the sun at sunrise; and lunar and solar conjunctions.

These bits of astrological information were critical to the prognosis and diagnosis performed by late medieval physicians, who, by the fifteenth century, had fully adopted principles of astrological medicine first introduced into Europe via Arabic and Greek writings in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. To meet this need, scholars created tables of astrological data for latitudes and longitudes at major centers of learning, like Toledo, Paris, and Oxford. These tables were typically calculated to give precise times of solar and lunar conjunctions for three to four Metonic cycles, the nineteen-year increments between the alignment of the solar and lunar calendars. Every fifty-seven to seventy-four years scholars would need to update and revise the existing astrological tables to extend them for the following three to four Metonic cycles.

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The first of these four, Royal Society of London MS 45, created perhaps a decade or so after the Rawlinson manuscript, looks much like that earlier pictorial calendar.\textsuperscript{62} It features an iconographic liturgical calendar running the length of a long parchment strip, the same odd system of numbering with dots, bars, and circles, and the same folding pattern. On the verso of the calendar, however, columns running the length of the strip give the dates of the month in Arabic numerals; the dominical letter; the Kalends, Nones, and Ides of the month derived from the Roman calendar; the Golden Number; the length of daylight in hours and minutes; the angle of the sun at sunrise; and the date, hour, and minute of the conjunction of the sun and moon.\textsuperscript{63} With this wealth of information, a reader could keep track of the hours of daylight available for planting or working, reckon dates for legal and administrative purposes, and above all, note the movements of celestial bodies for the purpose of prognosis or diagnosis.

The other three pictorial almanacs listed above also draw on the visual language of secular iconography developed in the Rawlinson calendar, as well as the religious iconography of pictorial liturgical calendars. Each features “labors of the month” and zodiac illustrations, as well as icons of the saints to indicate the order of the liturgical year.\textsuperscript{64} Each also includes the pictorial prognostications by dominical letter found in the

\textsuperscript{62} See Appendix A for a table of the formal characteristics and content of all pictorial manuscripts discussed in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{63} My description of this manuscript is taken from Pamela Robinson’s close study of Royal Society MS 45 in “A ‘Very Curious Almanack,’” 302–4.

\textsuperscript{64} BL Harley MS 2332, ff. 1v–13r; BL Royal MS 17 A.xvi, ff. 5r–16r. While the online catalogue entry for The Schøyen Collection MS 1581 suggests that it was copied directly from BL Harley 2332, the catalogue does not include folio numbers for the manuscript’s entries. Thus, though the Schøyen almanac appears to follow the exact order of the
Rawlinson calendar, as well as the pictorial account of historical events since the world’s creation. In at least two of these manuscripts, the pictorial histories have been updated to include notable events since the Rawlinson calendar was produced in 1389. These several entries indicate that the creators of these pictorial almanacs were at least somewhat familiar with the tradition of illustration established in the Rawlinson calendar.

Yet there is another source for these three pictorial almanacs that appears to have influenced their creation as much, or more so, than the Rawlinson calendar: British Library Additional MS 46143, a non-pictorial Latinate almanac created in 1408. It is because of the influence of this learned almanac that these three pictorial manuscripts differ so much from the exemplars discussed earlier in this chapter. Instead of long, folded strips of parchment, these three pictorial almanacs are composed as codices. All three pictorial manuscripts are around the same size as the Latinate Additional manuscript, and all three follow roughly the same order of entries typical to learned medical almanacs. Each has tables with illustrations indicating the solar and lunar eclipses that would occur during the four Metonic cycles covered by the almanac. They also all feature a homo signorum, or zodiac man, illustrating which astrological signs exerted influence over which parts of the body and an iconographic table that indicates

Harley almanac, I cannot cite its folios. After contacting the archivists at the Schøyen Collection I was informed that the manuscript has been lent out for several years and is inaccessible to scholars.

65 BL Harley MS 2332, f. 20v; BL Royal 17 A.xvi, f. 20v. Both depict the Battle of Shrewsbury, fought in 1403, but the Harley almanac depicts the coronation of Henry IV, while the Royal almanac depicts the coronation of Henry V and the Battle of Agincourt.

66 See Appendix A for a table of the formal characteristics and contents of all pictorial practical manuscripts discussed in this chapter.

67 BL Harley 2332, ff. 14v–17r; BL Royal 17 A.xvi, ff. 16v–17r.

68 BL Harley 2332, f. 18r; BL Royal A.xvi, f. 21r.
“in which sign the moon will be every day.” In short, these three pictorial almanacs manage to convey via icons and numbers much of the same astrological knowledge as that conveyed in the Latinate and learned BL Additional 46143.

As practical books, these three pictorial almanacs are far more sophisticated than the Rawlinson calendar, and yet, they still employ icons and images to do the work of text. Yet, as with the Rawlinson manuscript, I think it is safest to assume that these almanacs were not created in some attempt to cater to the “unlettered.” The *kalendars* entries by themselves presuppose a very high level of numeracy, a level far beyond that suggested by the dot-circle-dash numerical system in the pictorial liturgical calendars. Though the users of these manuscripts may not have been fluent enough in Latin to contend with a more typical, textual medical almanac, he or she must have been well-versed in principles of astronomy and astrology. Indeed, if an unfamiliarity with Latin were the problem, then the commissioners of these manuscripts might easily have chosen to model their books after other fifteenth-century almanacs with canons in Middle English. Instead, they made a deliberate choice when they privileged images over text, and there is very little evidence to suggest that they did so out of strict necessity.

I would contend that we gain a much clearer understanding of late medieval English book culture if we view these three pictorial almanacs not as pale imitations of

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69 *Tabula ad sciendum in quo signo fuerit lune omni die*, BL Harley 2332, ff. 18v–19r; BL Royal 17 A.xvi, ff. 19v–20r.
70 A mnemonic verse in Latin on f. 24 of BL Royal MS 17 A.xvi is badly misspelled, to the extent that a basic Latin verb, *agit*, is rendered as * eget*. This would indicate that its user was not at all familiar with Latin.
71 BL MS Harley 937, a folding almanac from 1431, and Wellcome Library MS 8004, an almanac codex from 1454, both feature much of the same content found in the Harley, Royal, and Schøyen almanacs (including the prognostications by dominical letter and by the lunar cycle), but utilize Middle English text rather than Latin or iconography.
more sophisticated texts, but rather as equally viable alternatives that tapped into a visual language resonant with fifteenth-century readers. If this interpretation is correct, then it certainly helps to explain why these visual motifs continued to proliferate in late medieval England. British Library MS Egerton 2724,72 created in Norwich around the year 1430, and Pierpont Morgan Library MS M.941, copied from the Egerton exemplar in 1433, are both folding calendars that follow the format of the Rawlinson exemplar.73 Both of these pictorial manuscripts contain the iconographic prognostications by dominical letter, neither of which are accompanied by text; a homo signorum, or zodiac man illustration; an iconographic table of “Nativities”; and pictorial representations of historical events in English history.74 Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 8 also follows the pictorial model set by the Rawlinson calendar, though that manuscript is a single-sheet folding version of the pictorial prognostication by the lunar cycle, or the storia lunae, rather than a liturgical calendar.75 But perhaps no manuscript illustrates the widespread

72 The Egerton calendar can be linked to Norwich because the calendar features a notation for the dedication of the cathedral at Norwich, on September 24, f. 2r. I dated this calendar to 1430 based on the pictorial historical events depicted on f. 11v. Two images corroborate that date: one depicting bodies in shrouds, representing the Black Death, indicating that eighty-two years had passed since the 1348 epidemic, and the second, showing a young king with a scepter, indicates that eight years had passed since the coronation of Henry VI, on August 31, 1422. A digitized facsimile of the Egerton calendar is available at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Egerton_MS_2724.

73 PML MS 941 is available in digital facsimile at http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/thumbs/145540.

74 Prognostications from dominical letter: PML MS M.941, f. 1v, and BL Egerton MS 2724, f. 4r and 5r; Homo signorum: BL Egerton MS 2724, f. 3r and PML MS M.941, f. 2v; Celestial diagram: Egerton 2724, f. 7r and PML M.941, f. 2v; Table of nativities: Egerton 2724, ff. 8r, 9r, 10r, and 11r and PML M.941 f. 2v and 3v; Historical events: Egerton 2724, ff. 11v and PML M.941, f. 3r.

75 In the Ashmole version the iconography is bolstered by explanatory text. Prognostications are divided into four columns, labeled “lettynge of blod,” “iuggynge hosbond & wife & for to lyue a gode lyfe,” “of childer & yong what day is ougt & what
influence of the program of secular illustration begun in the Rawlinson calendar quite so clearly as Houghton Library MS Richardson 35. This folio-sized manuscript dateable to 1430 contains a Middle English version of the prose Brut, a wildly popular English chronicle that traces the history of the island nation back to Brutus, grandson of the Trojan Aeneas. This vernacular chronicle has nothing in common with the pictorial manuscripts discussed in this chapter, and yet the verso of the half-width vellum stub at the opening of the manuscript contains a table of icons conveying the same prognostications by dominical letter (fig. 2.5).

![Figure 2.5: Pictorial prognostications by dominical letter in MS Richardson 35, Houghton Library, Harvard University, f. 1v.](https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/50d4436d-40cc-42be-9e18-667d40d0e184)

These several examples of pictorial prognostications illustrate how thoroughly secular iconography was adopted into late medieval English culture, a remarkable feat given that pictorial prognostications lacked the kind of cultural framework that reinforced the legibility of the saints’ icons or emblems of the crucified Christ. The fact that this visual language did spread and gain currency over a relatively short period of time is a testament to the robustness of manuscript culture in fifteenth-century England. Without a group of engaged and interested readers with the means and desire to commission replicas of pictorial prognostications it is easy to imagine the Rawlinson calendar as a one-off, an interesting artifact with little impact outside its narrow readership. Instead, the icons and images in that manuscript were adopted by other scribes elsewhere in England and shared among English readers in a variety of pictorial practical books.

Within a cultural milieu that encouraged English men and women to read the “book of peynture,” it appears that scribes, limners, and readers embraced the possibility of a “book of peynture” for everyday life, and what is most remarkable is the degree to which the visual language of prognostication appealed across the social spectrum. The “lewdecalendars” with which I began this chapter may well have been intended for men and women who were in fact “unlettered.” Likewise, the folding calendar and prognostication at the Pierpont Morgan Library bears evidence that it was created by someone totally unfamiliar with Latin. Both of these manuscripts are formulaic and

77 In several places it seems the creator of the PML calendar did not comprehend the text he was copying from the Egerton exemplar. For example, “All Soul’s Day” on November 1, is represented in both the Egerton and PML calendars with an image of the throne of heaven, but where the Egerton calendar captions the image in abbreviated Latin, “omnium sanctorum,” the PML calendar is captioned “omn Seor,” reflecting the scribe’s inability to extend the abbreviations or comprehend the Latin text for which it stood; see BL MS Egerton 2724, f. 3r, and PML MS M.941, f. 1v.
simple enough to have been referenced by men and women with little Latin or English. At the other end of the spectrum, however, the three pictorial almanacs discussed in this section are full of icons and pictures and detailed astrological tables. Though their users may not have had a strong command of Latin, there can be little doubt that they were educated in astronomy and astrology and had a good command of numbers. Yet those users chose images over text.

Frustratingly, beyond these generalizations about readers and their choices, little else can be said with precision about the users of the pictorial manuscripts discussed thus far in this chapter. Only the Royal almanac contains reader marks that hint at patterns of use or ownership, but even those reader marks date from over a half-century after the manuscript’s creation. They only reaffirm that the manuscript was utilized by the relatively learned. However, there is one figure from fifteenth-century England whose marks and manuscript additions do reveal a bit about the relationship between text and image for the late medieval reader: John Crophill, medical practitioner and bailiff of Wix Priory in Essex from 1455 to 1477.

Crophill’s reader marks appear throughout British Library Harley MS 1735—a composite of three separate manuscripts he once owned—but the marks that are most

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78 Throughout that manuscript are dozens of names scribbled in the margins, perhaps indicating that the manuscript was the communal property of a monastic house. On folio 26r, Thomas Rowland has signed his name to the Royal almanac with the descriptive title, “priour of the monastery.” This may be the same Thomas Rowland who was elected prior of Luffield, a Benedictine house on the border between Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, in 1488. If so, the Benedictine connection could help explain the movement of the pictorial motifs from the Rawlinson calendar to these other pictorial almanacs, as “Harry the Haywarde” was a manorial worker on a Benedictine estate in Worcester. See, William Page, ed., “Houses of Benedictine Monks: The Priory of Luffield,” in A History of the County of Buckingham: Volume 1 (London: Victoria County History, 1905), 347–50.
relevant to this dissertation occur throughout the first of these, a Middle English verse version of the *storia lunae* prognostication. To the margins of this *storia lunae* Crophill has added copious pen-and-ink drawings, each of which illustrates some facet of the textual prognostication on the page. To take just a few examples: on folio 2r, Crophill has drawn a man with a spade, representing Adam, beside the first day of the month’s prognostication that begins, “On the fyrste day of þe mone Adam Oure forinfader to þis werlde kam.” In another pen and ink drawing at the bottom margin of folio 3r, Crophill has sketched a diagram of a water mill’s millwheel with a toothed gear under the text of the prognostication that dictates “þat day is good myllus to byggyn.” And at the bottom margin of folio 6v, Crophill sketched a ship with a sail, referring to Noah, mentioned in the prognostication above (“In þe x day was born noe”). Following the prognostication, Crophill has added similar pen-and-ink marginalia to cookery recipes: a sketch of a mortar and pestle on f. 16v, a fish and kitchen implements on f. 17r, and almonds, sugar and a three-legged pot on f. 25r.

If we cannot entirely comprehend why the commissioners of the Harley, Schøyen, and Royal almanacs chose to use pictures over text, can we at least understand why Crophill chose to add illustrations to the margins of his (more traditionally textual) practical book? Again, we can dispense with any pretense that Crophill needed images because he had trouble reading the text. His notations in the commonplace book that form the last third of BL Harley 1735 indicate that Crophill could both read and write Middle

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79 A complete digital facsimile of the manuscript is available at [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Harley_MS_1735](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Harley_MS_1735).
80 For a complete list of Crophill’s illustrations, see Ayoub, “John Crophill’s Books,” 21–5.
English. The possibility remains that Crophill simply saw the wide margins of the professionally-copied *storia lunae* prognostication as an ideal place to try his hand at illustration. Yet, Crophill’s drawings are more than simple doodles or pen trials as one often finds in manuscripts, nor are they imitations of more elaborate and ornate manuscript illumination.

Crophill’s drawings are instructive rather than decorative. They are not illustrated scenes of action, but rather representations of individual elements within the prognostication meant to remind the reader of the whole: the millwheel for “good myllus to beggyn,” the man with a spade for Adam, and the ship for Noah. The marginalia in Crophill’s *storia lunae* operates similarly to the iconography of the prognostications by dominical letter. They work as devices to remind the reader of knowledge held in entirety elsewhere—either in the mind of the reader, as in the iconographic prognostications, or in the text block above, as in Crophill’s manuscript.81 A man like Crophill, capable of reading and writing in Middle English and perhaps a bit in Latin, could have read and comprehended the *storia lunae* without the accompanying illustration. And yet, he took the time to add this other medium of expression because it was meaningful to him in a different way. Despite the fact that these are not perhaps as straightforwardly “readable” as the text they accompany, they still served to instruct Crophill and to aid in the verse’s legibility. In a book that was meant to be referenced, these illustrations provided still more reference material.

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81 A similar set of marginal illustrations in a Hiberno-English copy of Piers Plowman appears to perform the same function as that in Crophill’s book; see, Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 287–91.
Throughout the medieval period, stretching back to the earliest monastic scriptoria in Ireland or Italy, illustration played an important role in the presentation of texts. Monks painstakingly added gold and brilliant colors to letters as a means of indicating their reverence for the religious words they copied. Even in the fifteenth century, when monastic scriptoria had given way to stationers’ workshops, the wealthy commissioned vividly illustrated religious books as markers of their social status. Perhaps in light of the continued status of illustrated books in late medieval society it is not at all surprising that literate men and women chose to explore the medium of image over text within practical manuscripts. Even so, it bears mentioning that the images and icons within these books serve a different purpose than illustration or decoration. Pictorial prognostications and calendars really do ask their readers to “read” a visual language, and, what is more, they encourage those readers to then extend that reading to include a host of other observational practices, i.e. “reading” the weather, or the lunar cycle, or the changing seasons.

This inclusive definition of reading that encompassed picture, text, and environment represents a sharp departure from the dominant medieval discourse on “reading pictures” which was entirely focused on devotion and meditation. The development of a secular iconography for practical purposes suggests that late medieval English readers had fully internalized this discourse. They then expanded on it to conceive of reading as a panoply of observational and recollective practices. That this inclusive and imaginative attitude toward reading found traction in late medieval England is just more evidence supporting the thesis that late medieval manuscript culture was
vibrant, creative, and robust, right up to the moment when the printing press would arrive and fundamentally reconfigure the way English people consumed these practical books.

III. Practical pictures in print

In 1476, William Caxton, a prosperous English Mercer who had spent time in Bruges learning the craft and trade of the printing press, set up the first English printing shop at the “Red Pale” in Westminster. As was the case for most early printers in England and elsewhere, Caxton set about creating printed editions of texts already popular in manuscript, finding ways to mirror the presentation and look of the manuscript codex with moveable type. Caxton’s early printed books were valued at much the same level as their handwritten counterparts, yet in one aspect Caxton’s printed books were markedly different from contemporary manuscripts. Despite the fact that, as we have seen, late medieval manuscripts frequently treated illustrations as integral to the function and purpose of the book, Caxton and other early English printers had difficulty recreating the visual motifs of English manuscript culture in print. Those visual motifs would have needed to be created through xylography, or woodcut printing, which actually predated the invention of moveable type by a few decades. Yet though continental printers used xylographic techniques to great success, producing pictorial block-books like the popular

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Biblia Pauperum, the English lagged far behind their continental peers when it came to woodcutting.86

For the first five years of Caxton’s English enterprise, not a single one of his works was illustrated, and over the remaining twenty-one years of his publishing career, Caxton only printed a total of only twenty works with illustration.87 Even his early editions of printed Books of Hours, or Horae, were totally devoid of iconography, despite the fact that manuscript Horae were richly illustrated books, often structured around the iconography of the “labors of the month,” the emblems of the saints, and the astrological houses.88 In 1481, Caxton finally produced his first illustrated book, an edition of The Mirrour of the World, which Edward Hodnett, cataloguer of early English woodcuts, described as containing “some of the poorest cuts ever inserted between covers.”89 And, to make matters worse, though Caxton used woodcuts that were direct copies of the illustrations in his manuscript exemplar of The Mirrour of the World, he still inserted the woodcuts in the wrong places throughout the printed book.90

86 Two examples of block-books from continental printers are Biblia Pauperum, Library of Congress Incun. X.B562 (Netherlands or Germany, 1470), https://www.loc.gov/item/49038879/; Biblia Pauperum, Princeton University Scheide Library S2.9 (Nuremberg: Hans Sporer, 1471), http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/ht24wj49c.
87 Hodnett, English Woodcuts, 1480–1535, 75–6; Hodnett, English Woodcuts, 1480–1535: Additions & Corrections, 1.
88 Caxton printed at least three books of hours for English use in 1476, 1479, and 1484, only the latter of which was illustrated, and even so, with only two woodcuts. See STC nos. 15867, 15868, and 15871. Edward Hodnett speculates on the basis of religious woodcuts in other Caxton printed books that he probably printed a now-lost, more fully illustrated Horae between 1484 and 1491, when the operation of his press passed to De Worde; see, English Woodcuts, 1480–1535, 6.
89 Hodnett, 1.
90 Duff, The Printers, Stationers, and Bookbinders of Westminster and London from 1476 to 1535, 12–13.
Slowly, however, Caxton built up a stock of woodcuts. Because of his earlier career in Bruges, many of Caxton’s cuts came either from Flemish artisans or were directly copied from continental woodcuts by artisans in his pay. His 1483 English edition of the *Legenda aurea*, or “Golden Legend,” a collection of hagiography wildly popular in manuscript, was the first to feature a full set of illustrated saints, complete with emblems like those found in pictorial liturgical calendars. Though like many of Caxton’s cuts, the saints are all depicted left-handed indicating that all of the cuts are copies. In 1484 William Machlinia, a rival of Caxton’s, produced the first illustrated, printed Book of Hours in England, but even still the eight woodcuts in the book are of Flemish rather than English origin, and the presentation of the book hardly rivals the standards of illustration found in manuscript *Horae*.

Finally, sometime between 1487 and 1490, Caxton produced what may be the first printed pictorial item intended for mass consumption in England: a printed indulgence featuring the “Image of Pity,” an emblematic illustration of the crucified Christ with the wounds of the passion, the spear, and the sponge at the center of the woodcut, surrounded by a border of icons representing the various events of the Passion. Unlike the earlier folio-sized illustrated volumes turned out by Caxton’s press, this pictorial indulgence was printed as a broadside on a single half-sheet. Nearly a decade after the press came to England, an English printer had produced “a picture […] chiefly for reading by the people.”

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92 This sparsely illustrated *Horae* may also be Machlinia’s only illustrated book; see Hodnett, 47.
93 *To them that before this image of pity devoutly say v. pater noster, v. aves & a credo piteously*, STC 14077c.6, EEBO (Westminster: W. Caxton, 1487).
In the 1490s, two foreign-born printers, Wynkyn de Worde, originally from Germany, and Richard Pynson, originally from France, were the dominant forces within the English print industry. Both were more capable than Caxton when it came to illustration. Over the span of his lengthy career from 1491 to 1534, De Worde published over 400 illustrated works, adding to Caxton’s original meager stock of woodcuts with new cuts commissioned from an English cutter, as well as numerous cuts purchased from French and Flemish artisans.94 Richard Pynson, originally from Normandy, may have learned a bit of the craft of woodcutting in Rouen under the tuition of Guillaume de Tailleur before coming to England. Once there, he used his French connections to great advantage, procuring numerous woodcuts from French artisans. Although Pynson was less prolific than De Worde, producing only upwards of 175 illustrated works, his woodcuts were often of superior quality.95

The sheer increase in the number of illustrated works printed by De Worde and Pynson as opposed to Caxton or Machlinia suggests that English printers were getting savvier and more capable when it came to illustration. And yet, these figures really tell only part of the story. From the very earliest days of the English print industry, English readers were supplied with books imported from continental workshops. London’s Customs Rolls reveal that Henry Frankenbergh and Bernard van Stendo from Utrecht, Johannes de Westphalia from Aachen, and Peter Actors from Savoy imported thousands of volumes into England from the late 1470s to the early 1490s. In 1484, the Crown went

so far as to specifically exempt these foreign book importers from the effects of a
Parliamentary Act meant to restrict foreign merchants from selling their wares in
England, no doubt because London-based printers simply could not meet readers’ needs
or match continental printers’ artisanship. Indeed, a great deal of De Worde’s and
Pynson’s productivity can be attributed to the influence of continental printers whose
books inspired their own copycat attempts. Particularly when it came to the sorts of
formulaic genres discussed in this chapter—Books of Hours, calendars, almanacs,
prognostications and, most especially, illustrated editions—continental printers led the
way and English printers followed suit.

In 1503 the Parisian printer Antoine Vérard published an English version of the
*Composte et kalendrier des bergiers*, or *Kalender of shepeherdes*, a volume of popular
astrology, religious instruction, and medical lore with numerous woodcut illustrations.
Vérard imagined, rightly, that a printed book of such material would be as popular in
England as it had been in France. Pynson, too, was quick to recognize that this hodge-
podge book of verse prognostications, mnemonic verses to remember the order of the
saints’ days, tables depicting how “to know in what sygne the moone is every daye” and
how to find the golden number and dominical letter would be a bestseller among his
English readers. Pynson produced his own copycat version, turning out another folio-
sized edition in 1506 with heavy criticism for Vérard. According to Pynson the French

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97 The trade in illustrated *Horae* was dominated by French printers, namely Philippe Pigouchet and François Regnault, right up to the eve of the Reformation; see, Duffy, *Marking the Hours*, 126–32.
work was inferior because “no man coude understonde” its “corrupte englysshe.” But while Vérard’s English may have been lackluster, his woodcuts were clearly superior to anything Pynson could produce. Rather than make his own illustrations for the 1506 edition, Pynson somehow or another got his hands on Vérard’s cuts and used those.

Some of the woodcuts that Pynson borrowed or bought from Vérard for his edition of the _Kalender of shepherdes_ were drawn from the visual traditions of perpetual almanacs and calendars: the labors of the month icons, astrological symbols, and the zodiac man. But the _Kalender of shepherdes_ was not really very much akin to the pictorial manuscripts discussed above. Pynson’s edition is in folio, its pages are filled with blocks of text, and a good number of the book’s titles and some of its verses are in Latin. It was not until Wynkyn de Worde published a quarto-sized edition of the _Kalender of shepherdes_ in 1511 that the work became slightly more accessible to middling readers. De Worde’s edition is more closely aligned with the visual conventions of the medieval perpetual almanac, opening with tables for figuring the golden number and for calculating the dates of moveable feasts in perpetuity, a detailed liturgical calendar with “labor of the month” icons, and tables of upcoming solar and

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98 _Here begynneth the kalender of shepherdes_, STC 22408, EEBO (London: in Flete strete at the sygne of the George by Rycharde Pynson, 1506), sig. A.ii.


100 De Worde would reprint this quarto edition again in 1516 and 1528 (STC nos. 22409 and 22411), and Pynson would reprint his folio edition in 1510 and 1517 (STC nos. 22409.3 and 22409.7).
lunar eclipses from 1480 to 1652 illustrated with woodcut figures. Even still, at over one hundred and fifty pages in quarto, De Worde’s Kalender is hardly a portable and easily referenced practical book.

This is not to say that, by the sixteenth century, readers could not have purchased pamphlet-sized almanacs and prognostications more similar in physical format to the manuscript calendars, almanacs, and prognostications from the fifteenth century. Simple almanacs, or printed tables of lunar and solar conjunctions, were sold from 1507 to the mid-1530s in editions no larger than octavo size. None of these printed almanacs were illustrated, and none were paired with prognostications as they had been in manuscript. Instead, prognostications were sold separately in pamphlet editions covering a single year’s events. Here too, English printers—and English readers—would follow the trends set on the continent. All prognostications published in England prior to the 1540s were authored by non-native astrologers. The earliest, for the years 1498 to 1503, were written by an Italian living in England, William Parron. Parron’s short forecasts in Latin survive for the years 1499, 1501, and 1502, and two fragments of English prognostications from 1498 suggest perhaps that someone had Parron’s work translated for a less educated

102 See, William Rede, Almanach ephemerides in anno domini m. d. vii., STC 504, EEBO (London: R. Pynson and Rouen, R. Mace, 1507); Almanacke for xii. yere, STC 387, EEBO (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1508); Almacke for xv. yeres., STC 389, EEBO (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1522); Almanacke for xv. yeres, STC 39, EEBO (London: Rychard Fakes, 1525); Anno domini. m. ccccc. xxxiiii, STC 391, EEBO (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1534); Almanacke for xiiii. yeres., STC 392.2, EEBO (London: Robert Wyer, 1539).
103 The Latin Parron prognostications, all printed by Pynson, are STC nos. 494.8, 494.9, and 494.10; see, Bernard Capp, English Almanacs, 1500 - 1800: Astrology and the Popular Press (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1979), 26.
audience. Then, from at least 1516 until at least 1548, the Laet family of Antwerp provided the English reading public with descriptions of upcoming eclipses for the year, weather forecasts, and political prognostications for the major cities and rulers of Europe. At first Laet’s prognostications were translated into English in Antwerp by Flemish printers with export in mind, but by 1518 English printers took over the translation and publication of this popular material for an English readership.

Again, as with the *Kalender of shepherdes*, these printed prognostications are vastly different from those that circulated in manuscript. These were specific prognostications for a single year, and they were presented in blocks of prose with no accompanying illustration. Only in 1523 did the printer Richard Banckes add an illustrated title page to his edition of Laet’s annual prognostication, and even then the illustration has nothing in common with the visual motifs of manuscript prognostications. Still, these inexpensive printed prognostications were immensely popular. Though the Laet family’s prognostications survive for only eight of the fourteen years between 1516 and 1530, printers almost certainly turned them out yearly. There are few sales records and no registers of English printed books prior to 1557, but those records that do exist help to fill in the gaps in the Short Title Catalogue. For example, the Oxford bookseller John Dorne’s register of his sales for the year 1520 records the sale of thirty-five “ciclus vel almanac,” twenty-three “prognosticata,” fifty-five “prognosticon in

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104 The two English fragments, one attributed to De Worde and one to Pynson, are STC 385.3 and 385.7. Bernard Capp has suggested that Parron himself did the translations into English, but only these two fragments of the English prognostication for 1498 survive, and there is no attribution of a translator in either; see Capp, 26.


The low cost of pamphlet almanacs or prognostications made them reliable sellers on the English market. Such a genre, good for only a few years, would not have been conceivable were it not for the ease with which the press allowed for large-scale production. Within a few decades of the coming of the press, it seemed everyone had to have one. The introduction of the printing press did not displace “popular” beliefs about the influence of weather, the stars, and the sun and moon on the world. Instead, the press merely brought about a change in the kinds of materials that addressed this desire among English readers. Instead of a perpetual prognostication based on the lunar cycle or the dominical letter—both of which were repetitive, yes, but which asked the reader to use his or her knowledge and “read” his or her surroundings to determine the auspiciousness of particular days, months, or years—the annual forecasts from Jasper Laet asked instead that a reader browse a few pages of English prose. Instead of a pictorial almanac like the Harley exemplar which gave lunar and solar oppositions and conjunctions and eclipses for seventy-six years, readers could purchase an inexpensive copy of De Worde’s \textit{Almanacke for xii. yeare} which plainly gave the phases of the moon for one hundred and forty-four months. None of these printed works offered this information through pictures.

Finally in 1522, forty-six years after the press came to England, English readers were given the chance to purchase printed artifacts that replicated the pictorial “lewdecalendars” of the manuscript era. These printed artifacts are almost identical to the
liturgical calendars with which I began section one of this chapter, but instead of hand-drawn saints’ emblems and labors of the month icons, they are xylographic, or printed from woodcuts. Each is printed on a long strip of vellum, with labors of the month and zodiac signs on one side and emblems of the saints and icons of historical dates on the other.\textsuperscript{107} In the exemplar below (fig. 2.6), the calendar has been hand-colored in green washes and lettered by hand with rubrication following the imprint of the woodblock. Unlike earlier manuscript exemplars, however, these printed calendars were tailored for English use: the lists of saints’ days include local saints Leodegarious (October 2), Edward the Confessor (October 13), and King Edmund (November 20).\textsuperscript{108} In the list of years elapsed since notable Biblical and historical events, the penultimate entry is for years “\textit{A passione sancti Thome},” a reference to Thomas Becket.

\textsuperscript{107} These are Bodleian Library Douce A 632 (dateable to 1522); BL C.36.aa.5 (dateable to 1537); BL C.41.a.28 (dateable to 1538); and BL C.29.c.6 (dateable to 1542). Eustace Bosanquet mentions four other exemplars in private hands that he claims to have seen when compiling his catalogue but he fails to provide any bibliographic data. See, Eustace F. Bosanquet, \textit{English Printed Almanacks and Prognostications: A Bibliographical History to the Year 1600} (London: For the Bibliographical Society at the Chiswick Press, 1917), 14–6. A digitized facsimile of Bodleian Douce A 632 is available at https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/a196b40f-1c6c-4b92-a51c-129a349efb24.

Earlier I argued that, in manuscript, pictorial liturgical calendars suggest a shared pan-European understanding of the legibility of images particularly evocative of late medieval religious practice, as well as a shared sense of openness as to how a book-object might operate. Here, it seems, is evidence that those particular traditions carried forward into the era of print. By the 1520s England was falling in line with trends in woodcut printing that had been dominant for a century or more in German and French speaking regions. Continental artisans and cutters, as we have seen, were far more sophisticated in the medium than were their English counterparts, but the English were catching on. Besides the emergence of these pictorial calendars, the “Image of Pity” icon, featuring the crucified Christ surrounded by a border of emblems representing the Passion, was reprinted in at least twenty-six different editions following Caxton’s first imprint from

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Xylographic liturgical calendars were just an extension what was a growing momentum to translate the visual rhetoric of medieval devotion into the medium of print.

Good students of English history know, however, that within just a few short years of the appearance of printed, xylographic liturgical calendars in England, Henry VIII precipitated a break with the Roman church as the final act in his quest to be rid of his Queen and beget a male heir. Though Henry was not himself particularly Reformist in his theology, his Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer and chief councilor Thomas Cromwell were both of a mind to correct the superstitious practices of the medieval church. The two men took special aim at two of the principles of lay devotion upon which pictorial liturgical calendars rested: the veneration of the saints in images and the celebration of numerous holy days. In 1534, Cromwell sanctioned a new English Primer that did away entirely with the liturgy of the saints. The following year another new edition of the English Primer lamented that “some people have ben greatly deludyd of longe tyme about the veneracyon of Sayntes.”

The Ten Articles of 1536 did reaffirm the use of images under the medieval principle that they might be “kindlers and firers of men’s minds,” but only a few days after the Articles were confirmed, the “Act for the

110 The “Image of Pity” survives in twenty-seven copies (STC nos. 14077c.6–.23B), which may in fact represent hundreds, if not thousands, of printed copies that are now lost. The last of these xylographic indulgences printed in England was published by Michael Fawkes in 1534; see Tessa Watt’s discussion of these icons in Watt, Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640, 131–33; see also, Hodnett, English Woodcuts, 1480–1535, nos. 350, 381, 390, 454, 459, 568, 1374, 2016, 2024, 2380, 2039, 2062, and 2498; Hodnett, English Woodcuts, 1480–1535: Additions & Corrections, nos. 2507, 2508, and 2513.

abrogation of certain holydays” did away with much of the traditional Church calendar, removing both local saints’ feasts and numerous major feast days from the ritual year.\footnote{David Wilkins, ed., \textit{Concilia Magnae Britannisae et Hiberniae, ab Anno MCCCCL ad Annum MDXLV. Volumen Tertium}. (London: R. Gosling, F. Gyles, T. Woodward, & C. Davis, 1737), 821–4; Duffy, \textit{The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580}, 391–5.}

The \textit{Bishop’s Book} of 1537 again took a moderate line and reaffirmed the presence of images in holy spaces, but only two years later, the Injunctions of 1538 outlawed acts of devotion before images, including the burning of candles or tapers before depictions of the saints.\footnote{Wilkins, \textit{Concilia Magnae Britannisae et Hiberniae, ab Anno MCCCCL ad Annum MDXLV. Volumen Tertium}, 816; Duffy, \textit{The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580}, 401–7.} With the downfall of Cromwell, Henry VIII returned to a traditionalist position with the Six Articles of 1539 which lasted to the end of his reign in 1547.\footnote{The Six Articles of 1539 did not expressly treat the use of images, but one of the manuscript copies of the \textit{Rationale of Ceremonial} (1540) includes a passage on “the Right use of Images” which describes them as “unlearned men’s books.” See, Cyril S. Cobb, ed., \textit{The Rationale of Ceremonial, 1540-1543, with Notes and Appendices and an Essay on the Regulation of Ceremonial during the Reign of King Henry VIII}, (Longmans, Green, and Co.: London, 1910), 44–5; 31 Henry VIII c. 14: An Acte abolishing diversity in Opynions, \textit{in Statutes of the Realm, Vol. 3: 1509–1545} (Wesminster: House of Commons, 1819), 739–43; Duffy, \textit{The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580}, 427–9.}

The back and forth of the 1530s certainly contributed to a general feeling of instability among English worshippers, but despite a growing distrust of iconography, surviving exemplars of xylographic calendars indicate that these pictorial artifacts were printed in the last decade of Henry’s reign once he had begun to moderate earlier policies.\footnote{See BL C.36.aa.5 (1537); BL C.41.a.28 (1538); BL C.29.c.6 (1542).} So, it seems, the tradition of the pictorial liturgical calendar did weather the early stages of England’s Reformation. In fact, in 1537 an English reader commissioned British Library MS Additional 17367, the only surviving English pictorial manuscript
calendar dating from the sixteenth century. The manuscript is composed on a long strip of vellum designed to fold into a square, and it contains saints’ icons, labors of the month images, and zodiac signs just as medieval versions did. But there are considerable differences too: the monthly prognostications from thunder and the annual ones by dominical letter are written out in English prose, as are directions for calculating moveable feasts and a treatise on auspicious days according to zodiac sign. The thunder prognostications are accompanied by images, but these images function as illustrations rather symbols or icons. Compared to the printed almanacs and prognostications that were already very popular among English readers in 1537, BL Additional 17367 is a lavish production. Its creation suggests that someone was looking to hold on to earlier visual traditions and create a book object that was more permanent than a broadsheet or pamphlet almanac.

It seems likely that whomever commissioned Additional 17367 did so because he or she assumed that the rhythms of the liturgical year and cycles of the seasons were never ending and that such a book would remain in use for a long time. Its cyclical prognostications by weather or dominical letter could have been used in perpetuity. However, evidence from within Additional 17367 reveals the opposite to be true. The very last example of an English pictorial practical manuscript was actively used for only a decade—no longer than a cheaply printed pamphlet almanac like De Worde’s Almanacke for xii. yere. We can say with precision when exactly Additional 17367 was commissioned and when it was no longer used because the manuscript includes a list of regnal dates for English monarchs as its final entry. We know the manuscript was commissioned in 1537 because its table of historical events notes that twenty-eight years
have elapsed since the coronation of the king, and its table of “names & raignes of all the kings” includes Edward VI, who was not born until October 1537. We know the manuscript was used right up until the end of Henry’s reign, because someone has filled in the chart to include Henry VIII’s total reign of thirty-eight years. However, no regnal years are given for Edward VI, indicating that the calendar fell out of use after 1547.116

We have no way of knowing exactly why BL Additional 17367 was no longer useful to its owner after 1547, but a series of policy changes enacted by Edward VI, Henry’s heir and Protestant-educated son, may provide a partial answer. A new set of Injunctions drawn up after Henry’s death in 1547 reaffirmed the reformist positions of the Injunctions of 1538, and in fact doubled down on condemnation of images, giving orders for the destruction and removal from churches of images that had been abused or incited superstition. The 1549–50 “Acte for the abolishing and puttinge away of diverse Bookes and Images” went even farther, ordering the destruction and removal of all graven and painted images from churches, and the destruction of a host of religious books, including primers. The act did specify that primers printed during the reign of Henry VIII were exempted, so long as the “Invocation or Prayer to Saincts” was “blotted or clerely put out”—a generous concession from a son to his father’s legacy.117 In 1551, Edward put the final nail in the coffin of the Catholic ritual year with the “Acte for the keeping of Hollie daies and Fastinge dayes,” which reduced the number of holy days in the church year to twenty-three. And as the wording of that act made clear, even those

116 BL Additional MS 17367, sec. 10v.
holy days that remained in the calendar were not “for any of the Saints sake whose memories ar had on those dayes, for so all dayes and tymes considered arr Gods.” By 1551, there was no reason to use a pictorial liturgical calendar to celebrate feast days that no longer existed, and there was certainly no reason to hold on to a book that might come under scrutiny from church or crown authorities.

Edward VI’s reign was short, however,—only six years long—and following his death and the failed attempt to install the Protestant Jane Grey on the throne, Edward’s much older Catholic half-sister, Mary, reversed all of Edward’s reformist policies. As part of the reinstatement of Roman religion, Mary authorized a new English primer with traditional prayers. In 1555, John Wayland produced what would be the most popular primer of the Marian reign, but once again, like printers from the first decades of the sixteenth century, Wayland used a French-made exemplar as his model book. Even with these continental origins, and even though the Wayland primers returned to Catholic prayers, in several ways they reveal the impact of Henrician and Edwardian reform. First and foremost, they are in English; second, they omit any mention of indulgences; and finally, they are nearly entirely devoid of imagery. In the over 380 pages that make up the 1555 edition of the Primer in Latin and English there are only twelve images, none of which is larger than initial-sized.

120 The primer in Latin and Englishe (after the vse of Sarum) with many godlye and deuoute prayers, as in the contentes doth appere whereunto is added a playne and godly treatise concerning the masse, and the blessed sacramente of the aulter, for the
It would make sense that religious images might not recover from a decade or more of destruction and general unease. But what about the secular iconography of pictorial prognostications? That sort of astrological knowledge should have been left entirely untouched by the iconophobic machinations of Reformist councilors. In fact, while the Reformation was upending long-held traditions within the production of religious books, the production in almanacs and prognostications was continuing apace. By the mid-1540s, English astrologers like Andrew Boorde and Anthony Askham had finally displaced the dominance of the Laet family and were turning out annual almanacs and prognostications themselves. Askham produced an annual almanac and prognostication for every year from 1548–57. Rival astrologer Henry Low began a series in 1554, followed by William Cunningham in 1558, Lewes Vaughn in 1559, and Thomas Hill in 1560.\footnote{Capp, \textit{English Almanacs, 1500 - 1800: Astrology and the Popular Press}, 28–9.} Consumers could purchase these yearly editions in octavo-sized books of between thirty and forty pages, or considerably abridged in single, broadside sheets laid out in calendar fashion. Those in book form offered more detailed information about celestial movements and meteorological and agricultural forecasts for the coming year, while those in broadside form offered only basic information on lunar and solar eclipses for the year, the lunar phases of the month, and simple notations as to when to let blood, take purges or drinks, or to plant or sow. Broadside almanacs also made use of the traditional iconography of the medieval almanac more so than their counterparts in book form, including initial-sized woodcuts of the astrological signs, labors of the month, and

\textit{instruccion of the vnlearned and simple people}, STC 16065, EEBO (London: Iohn Wayland, 1555).
the *homo signorum*. However, as figure 2.7 below illustrates clearly, broadside almanacs could hardly be described as pictorial.

Figure 2.7: Anthony Askham, *An almanacke and prognostication made for the yeare, of our Lorde God, M. D. C. LV made by Maister Anthony Askham phisician and preste*, STC 410.7, EEBO (London: Thomas Marshe, 1554), recto. Image published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.
While the English had been experiencing a complete overhaul of ritual and liturgy, very little had changed in terms of readers’ interests in astrology, learning to predict the cycles of time, or reckoning favorable and unfavorable days. If anything, the press only increased those interests as greater numbers of English printers competed for these readers’ hard-earned coin via rival publications. Yet most rival editions of almanacs or prognostications look very much the same; the marketability of these cheaply printed books or broadsides entirely depended on the reputation the astrologer built for himself. Indeed, we should probably imagine the almanacs of Askham, Boorde, Vaughn, or Cunningham as advertisements of their astrological expertise designed to build a clientele.122

This hustle for respectability amid a climate of intense market-based competition no doubt influenced the author of yet another mid-sixteenth-century prognostication, Leonard Digges. Digges’s 1555 publication of *A prognostication of right good effect* was marketed as a sort of antidote to cheap, annual prognostications and a correction to the “manifest imperfections, and manifold errers yearly committed” by their authors.123 According to Digges, these yearly publications did not ask their readers to understand the principles of astrology or astronomy. They merely offered forecasts. By contrast, Digges’s perpetual prognostication would teach readers “by infallible rules taught for ever, a truthe of all such thynges as heretofore have ben put forth […] for one yeares profit onely.”124

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122 Capp, 52–4.
124 Digges, sig. **.iii.
What Digges was offering, in actual fact, was a return to the types of almanacs and prognostications common in the late medieval era, when the perceived permanence and longevity of the manuscript codex mitigated against anyone even dreaming of producing a single year’s prognostication. Indeed, most of the material within *A prognostication of right good effect* is drawn from these medieval manuscript sources, then dressed up with a heavy dose of pretention and Latin jargon. Most notably, Digges offers a prognostication “from New Year’s Day” that is remarkably similar to the dominical letter prognostications that circulated in manuscript. In Digges’s New Year’s prognostication, if the New Year fell on a Sunday, there would be “a pleasant Wynter […] fructe sufficient: Hervest indifferent, yet some wynde.”\(^{125}\) In a similar prognostication found in a mid-fifteenth century practical manuscript, the same New Year’s day would mean a winter “good & warme […] herastie windy […] & also hevy plenty of frute.”\(^{126}\)

In the midst of Mary’s brief Counter-Reformation, as older models of devotion and older editions of books were being recuperated for the English population, Digges’s *A prognostication of right good effect* performed a similar function for the astrological lore of the medieval era. What was old was brand new again—literally—as Digges made no mention of the fact that his “infallible rules taught for ever” originated in manuscript sources. Even so, Digges’s return to older models of prognostication from manuscript sources may have inspired a contemporary of his in London to revisit another medieval tradition in print: the pictorial prognostication.

\(^{125}\) Digges, sig. C.iii b.

\(^{126}\) Wellcome Library MS 8004, f. 69r.
In 1556 Robert Wyer published *A perfyte pronostycacion perpetuall*, subtitled, “Very easy to be understand, of the Reader. Yea, and also for them whiche knoweth not a letter on the Booke.”\(^{127}\) This book, to my knowledge the only pictorial prognostication ever printed in England, opens with a very simple “Almanacke for xv yeares” showing only the dates of Easter, dominical letters, golden numbers, and leap years. After a preface to the “Gentyll reader” the rest of the book contains a series of very crude woodcut icons, accompanied by short phrases in English, forecasting crop yields, crime, weather, and diseases for the coming year based on the New Year. Many of the icons in this book—like the man’s head in profile to indicate the seasons or the three bodies wrapped in shrouds to represent death—are taken directly from the earlier manuscript versions discussed in section two of this chapter. But while this printed book has its roots in medieval traditions, it also appears that the woodcutter behind *A perfyte pronostycacion perpetuall* was inspired to revisit those traditions thanks to the popularity of Leonard Digges’s *A prognostication of right good effect*. The pictorial prognostications in *A perfyte pronostycacion perpetuall* align with Digges’s exactly.

By contrast to Digges, who marketed his book as a work of erudition and learning, the author of *A perfyte pronostycacion perpetuall* who gives his initials as “I. A.” explicitly marketed his work to “Ignoraunt people, that is not skylled on the Booke,” so that they may “perceive and have some understandynge howe the yeare doth go aboute, [just] as well as the learned men.”  

Clearly this cutter was familiar with the iconography of manuscript prognostication, but though he tried to mimic the look of manuscript iconography, it does not appear that he had a complete understanding of the

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full panoply of meanings attached to the color, positioning, or repetition of the images. The woodblocks are employed by the printer in such a way that they lack any stable meaning. For instance, the prognostication “Winter wyndye” in the figure 2.8 above is represented by a man’s head, in profile, with lines indicating breath blowing from his mouth. And yet, in the prognostication for Friday, we see the same prediction—“Winter wyndye”—accompanied by a head in profile with no lines indicating breath. That same icon of the head in profile without wind appears in the prognostication for Sunday, with the caption “Wynter temperate, enclyned to heat,” and the prognostication for Monday, with the caption, “Wynter bl[e]acke.” In the figure above we can also see that the prognostications “Fruyte indyfferente” and “Sykeness of women” are positioned on the bottom of the left-hand side of the page, but the icons that should accompany those prognostications are on the top of the right-hand side, and they are misplaced so that it appears the typesetter had no understanding of how the icons even related to their textual captions. The icon for “Fruyte indyfferente”—what appears to be a fruit tree—takes the right-hand position in the double column of icons, whereas its caption on the preceding page takes the left-hand position.

The relationship between A perfyte pronostycacion perpetuall and Digges’s Prognostication of right good effect beautifully illustrates how a particular way of thinking about books in English manuscript culture—about what they could do and how they could be read—was not easily translated into the medium of print. The anonymous I. A. set out to create a book for the unlearned using pictures rather than text, but though the creator of this book was obviously still familiar with the sentiment that “a picture is chiefly for reading by the people,” he was apparently unable to understand what would be
required of a book to allow for that kind of reading. The utility of pictorial practical books depended on the legibility, stability, and the exact repeatability of their pictorial statements. Ironically, it is the printed book that has been given credit for producing the “exactly repeatable pictorial statement,” but in the case of the pictorial practical books examined in this chapter, it was the coming of the press that disrupted what were already repeatable (and oft repeated) pictorial statements in manuscript.\footnote{Eisenstein, \textit{The Printing Press as an Agent of Change}, 64.} It is not that elements of English culture prior to the advent of print were entirely forgotten, or that the interests and desires of readers markedly changed from 1475 to 1556, but by 1556 the host of observational, recollective, and reflective visual practices described as “reading” in the fifteenth century had given way to a world of print and text.

IV. Conclusion

Pictorial practical books can be best understood as the natural extension of a worldview intimately tied to western Christianity wherein images were just as suitable as letters for the make-up of a book. Over the course of this chapter, I have traced how this practice moved beyond the confines of religion to spur late medieval English men and women to imagine other places where pictures might serve to instruct. English pictorial practical manuscripts suggest that late medieval Englishmen and women understood the practice of “reading images” in and of itself, separate from the practice of devotion. In section three I followed England through the coming of the press, emphasizing the international scope of the early print trade in England, and, in particular, the extent to which early printed illustration, and early printed almanacs and prognostications, were
the products of continental authors, artisans, and print shops. The English left aside the perpetual almanac and pictorial prognostication in favor of new printed artifacts that addressed many of the same needs, but which required entirely different sorts of skills, observational techniques, and reading practices. These new artifacts were not entirely devoid of the illustration of the manuscript era, but neither can they be described as printed works carrying on the habits and *mentalités* of the manuscript era.

In the midst of this technological change, the English also underwent considerable ideological change in the form of the Reformation. Prognostications and almanacs were never directly in the crosshairs of Reformist policies, but the tradition of woodcut iconography only just taking hold in early sixteenth-century England was quickly uprooted with only a few years of iconoclastic legislation. Mary brought a brief return to the old ways in the mid-1550s, and Digges’s *A prognostication of right good effect* can be understood to emerge from a particular moment of rediscovery of late medieval tradition in the mid-sixteenth century. Yet, as the iconographic counterpoint to Digges’s work makes clear, not all medieval traditions were easily recuperated. Though the anonymous I.A. did his best to create an iconographic prognostication for those “that is not skylled on the Book,” it appears that he was mimicking a visual language that he recognized but no longer understood. The icons fail as stable representations of concepts held elsewhere; only the textual captions are legible.

Though this chapter does not pretend to explain the collapse of Roman religion in England or the particular power of iconophobia in the mid- and later sixteenth century, it is perhaps noteworthy that the conclusions I have arrived at in this chapter echo much of what has been written by historians of the Reformation in their accounts of traditional
religion: despite great change and new ways of doing things, vestiges of the old habits—and images—remained. From as early as the 1520s and 1530s, English reformers influenced by Zwinglianism and later Calvinism warned of the dangerous threat of idolatry by way of religious imagery. And yet, even in the midst of the sometimes iconoclastic English Reformation, hardline reformers still acknowledged that pictures could be a “kindler and firer of men’s minds” as “the unlearned men’s books.” Tessa Watt’s study of popular print, which takes off almost from the moment when this chapter ends, reveals that even in iconophobic late-sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, religious images found their way into moralizing broadsides, though the English had left aside the icons of the saints and the images of the Passion in favor of allegorical symbols of Protestant virtues.

Despite the longevity of certain elements of the pictorial tradition in later early modern England, this examination of pictorial practical manuscripts has proposed that there really was a sharp break with the visual traditions of the medieval era in the first few decades of the sixteenth century, whether neatly ascribed to Protestantism or the coming of the press or simply to the mediocrity of English woodcutters. The vestiges of medieval visual culture that do survive—either printed in A perfyte pronostycacion perpetuall, or hand-drawn in the mid-sixteenth-century miscellany of George Walker, gentleman of Northamptonshire—gesture at a past that is past, no longer completely understood or entirely relevant. Walker, whose recipe book opened this chapter, must

130 Scribner, For the Sake of Simple Folk, 190–228.
132 Cobb, The Rationale of Ceremonial, 1540-1543, with Notes and Appendices and an Essay on the Regulation of Ceremonial during the Reign of King Henry VIII, 44–5.
have appreciated something about the visual tradition of pictorial prognostications, otherwise why make the attempt to draw out figures representing “Greate war,” “deathe of beaste,” or “greate fluddes of snowe”? Yet Walker gave up after a bit, because though he recognized the tradition of drawing out those little icons, he could not see the point given his ability to simply read their textual captions. Likewise, the misplaced and badly labeled icons of *A perfyte pronostycacion perpetuall* suggest that the sixteenth-century typesetter who laid out the book had no sense of the meanings attached to the engraved icons, nor any sense that the book could ever function devoid of text. The “period eye” of the fifteenth-century English reader had transformed into a new “period eye” where image and text were always found together in the pages of a printed book.

This is not to say that all bits of late medieval English book culture atrophied over the course of the sixteenth century. To the contrary, the following chapter will explore the incredible longevity of late medieval recipes, instructions, and other practical texts. But in terms of this particular way of reading and comprehending the world, this element of late medieval book culture could not weather the numerous technological and cultural changes of the sixteenth century. This is not a story of deliberate, ideologically-based destruction of a traditional, medieval past, but rather a story of the fragility of cultural practices in the face of change and upheaval, and the difficulty of recapturing the meanings behind those practices once they have faded.
CHAPTER THREE
Making practical knowledge

Sometime after February of 1580, when Catherine Tollemache moved into Helmingham Hall as the new lady of the manor, she opened the vellum cover of her family’s handwritten recipe book. Perhaps she was searching for directions to make a silk trim, a pattern for planting her new herb garden, or the dimensions of fabric necessary to make a man’s shirt. The Tollemache Book of Secrets, the title that modern scholars have given to the fifteenth-century miscellany consulted by Catherine Tollemache and preserved by her descendants, contains directions for all of these tasks. Although we are forced to speculate as to which of these recipes Tollemache found most useful, her inscription on the inside of the limp vellum cover of the manuscript—“Catheren Tallemache oneth this boocke”—indicates that she once thumbed its pages.

By the time she inscribed her name in this manuscript, however, it was already a century old, having been compiled in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Catherine Tollemache, (née Cromwell), was the daughter of Henry Cromwell, second Lord Cornwall, and the great-granddaughter of Henry VIII’s counselor, Thomas Cromwell, the man largely responsible for constructing and implementing the early, more

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1 Portions of this chapter are forthcoming in the Journal of British Studies. See Reynolds, “‘Here is a Good Boke to Lerne’: Practical Books, the Coming of the Press, and the Search for Knowledge, ca. 1400–1560” Journal of British Studies 58, no. 2 (April 2019).
3 Griffiths, Edwards, and Barker, 114.
4 Griffiths, Edwards, and Barker, xviii.
Protestant phase of Henry VIII’s Reformation. She was an educated woman with the
ability to read and write, and she used these skills to compose her own personal collection
of confectionary recipes, the Receipts of pastery, confectionary, &c. Tollemache was also
a recognized healer whose memorial plaque in the church at Helmingham Hall reads
“While she liv’d, for her pietie toward God, pity toward þe poore, and charity in
releeving (through her skill and singular experience in chirurgerie) þe sick & sore
wounded, she was belov’d and honour’d by all.”5 Indeed, Tollemache was
knowledgeable in all the ways that scholars have come to expect of a woman of her era
and of her social status: in medicine, cookery, surgery, confectionary, and the myriad
other household activities necessary for the running of a country manor.6 To accrue all
this knowledge, she would have had access to printed medical books, recipe collections,
and pamphlets, as well as a communal network of experiential knowledge exchanged
between friends, neighbors, and family members.7 Even so, Catherine Tollemache, a

5 Griffiths, Edwards, and Barker, 2–3n5.
6 There is a vast and growing literature on the early modern recipe book and the women
literate, well-to-do late sixteenth-century woman with access to any number of printed books or contemporary recipe collections, valued this medieval manuscript enough to mark it as her own.

*The Tollemache Book of Secrets* is just one of scores of fifteenth-century English manuscripts that contain vernacular instructions for making various medicines, textiles, inks, colors, and cuisines, alongside instructions for agriculture or animal husbandry and hawking, hunting, or fishing. Like the pictorial manuscripts discussed in Chapter 2, these vernacular collections of useful knowledge proliferated in the fifteenth century thanks to innovations in book-making and the vibrancy of English manuscript culture. In the previous chapter I argued that practical pictorial manuscripts emerged from this robust manuscript culture and from traditions of medieval devotion that insisted on the legibility of images. But pictorial manuscripts comprise only one small segment of the extant archive in vernacular English practical books. Many more of the practical manuscripts created in fifteenth-century England were filled with written recipes, instructions, and treatises intended for the growing numbers of men and women who were able to read English.

From around the last quarter of the fourteenth century, England saw an exponential increase in the creation and circulation of vernacular medical, scientific, and didactic writings. Peter Jones describes a proliferation of these manuscripts “on a different scale than earlier developments” as Latinate compendia “for university purposes
were] rapidly overtaken in number by the book supplying practical and informational needs for the householder.” Rossell Hope Robbins contends that there were at least six times as many manuscripts with vernacular medical information created in the fifteenth century than in the fourteenth century. Certainly, as I argued in Chapter 1, changes to book production, increasing access to paper, new scripts, and rising literacy all contributed to this rapid increase. But while material and economic change may account for how and why these collections were more accessible in fifteenth-century England, we have yet to assess what impact the proliferation of these collections had on fifteenth-century readers. How did late medieval men and women understand the purpose of these collections of practical knowledge? What did it mean to own a personal book of recipes or instructions?

To answer these questions from the perspective of the late medieval Englishman it will be necessary, first, to dispense with our scholarly assumptions about craft and medical recipes and their role in the pre-modern world. These scholarly assumptions have, for the most part, developed from the work of historians of Renaissance-era science. Through analysis of craft manuals or instructional treatises from Renaissance Italy, the Low Countries, France, or Germany, these scholars emphasize the critical role that recipes played in bringing about new attitudes toward nature, observation, and

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9 Robbins, “Medical Manuscripts in Middle English,” 393n2. Medical recipes are by far the most common entry within vernacular practical manuscripts, but the variety of knowledge contained within most of these collections makes the term “medical manuscript” imprecise. See Appendix B for a table illustrating the contents of the manuscripts consulted for this chapter.
experimentation in Renaissance and early modern Europe. In particular, historians have focused on the recipe as a site for cognitive translation, wherein a master craftsman worked out how to convey hands-on processes in writing, thereby making a world of “embodied knowledge” available to the broader public, and eventually, to the learned who would don the mantle of “scientist.” According to Pamela Smith, this act of translating “embodied knowledge” into writing represented “an attempt to ‘think about thinking,’ to think about embodied cognition and [...] the foundations of knowledge.”

In other words, via recipes, both the artisan and the philosopher were working out the new order of the natural world.

Late medieval English recipe books and practical miscellanies have played no role in these narratives. Though there is a robust and growing literature on later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English domestic medicine, household manuals, and science, no such attention has been paid to the vast trove of fifteenth-century practical manuscripts. When historians of science do attend to fifteenth-century treatises or instructional manuals, they are generally referring to complex directions for glassmaking, metallurgy,

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11 Smith, “In the Workshop of History: Making, Writing, and Meaning,” 27; see also, Long’s discussion of the importance of printed technical manuals to the transmission of empirical knowledge in *Openness, Secrecy, Authorship*, 175–209, 249–50.

12 Most notable among these recent publications on early modern English domestic recipe books, medicine, and science is Elaine Leong, *Recipes and Everyday Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).
and weapons-making developed by Italian practitioners.¹³ By contrast, the recipes most commonly found in fifteenth-century English recipe books tend to be simple directives for household medicaments, crafts, and agriculture or animal husbandry.¹⁴ Yet the relative simplicity of late medieval English practical miscellanies should not preclude us from studying them carefully. To the contrary, the decidedly mundane and down-home quality of late medieval English recipe books makes them excellent sources for studying shifts in attitudes toward the collection and preservation of knowledge among the broader English population. They may not fit neatly within the now-dominant narrative that links craftsmanship to empirical observation and experimentation, but, even so, English recipe books still encouraged readers to—as Pamela Smith puts it—“think about thinking.”

In this chapter I argue that we can learn a great deal about English attitudes toward knowledge—where it comes from, how to gather it, and how and by whom it might be discovered—by studying the composition and circulation of recipes and instructional treatises in medieval and early modern England. In Chapter 2, I demonstrated how certain reading practices collapsed in the era of print. Yet, as I hinted at the close of that chapter, the effects of the press were varied and variable. In the case of recipe collections, the press did not so much collapse the traditions of manuscript culture but reinvent them. To understand the impact of the press on the collection of useful knowledge in late medieval England, however, it will first be necessary to gain a firmer understanding of what late medieval people thought about the collection and preservation

¹³ Pamela Long studies Italian collections of craft knowledge pertaining to metallurgy, weapons-making, and architecture in Openness, Secrecy, Authorship, 175–243; Long, Artisan/Practitioners and the Rise of the New Sciences, 1400-1600, 62–119.
¹⁴ More information on the contents of medieval English practical miscellanies is available in Appendix B.
of useful knowledge in manuscript. To that end, in this chapter, I closely analyze the contents and composition of four late medieval recipe books and then situate these four manuscripts within a corpus of 107 fifteenth-century English practical miscellanies. Through this combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis, I explore what late medieval readers and writers thought about the origin and utility of practical knowledge and the purpose of the practical book.

Next, I trace the movement of popular practical texts from manuscript sources into early printed books. Through analysis of printers’ marketing techniques, I reveal how the pressures of a commercial book market gradually transformed the ways that practical texts were presented to readers, thus conditioning them to expect to discover “new” knowledge in the pages of printed books. While this story is one of continuity from script to print, medieval to early modern, it is also an exploration of the complex ways that readers’ attitudes toward practical knowledge were transformed by new media, new methods of circulation, and competition within the commercial book market.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this chapter will demonstrate that the effects of the commercialized market were not visited equally on all texts or on all readers. Not all categories of medieval practical knowledge were carried into print. In particular, this chapter highlights how categories of knowledge associated with women, like charms, recipes for abortifacients, for textile work, and folk magic, were left out of recipe collections in print. I argue that early modern readers apportioned value to particular categories of useful, hands-on knowledge in direct relation to how (and in what medium) these categories circulated in sixteenth-century England. In conclusion, this chapter will explore how the development of an epistemological distinction between
published and unpublished knowledge contributed to the gendering of certain categories of knowledge in early modern England.

I. Practical knowledge and the making of the miscellany

_The Tollemache Book of Secrets_, the medieval recipe book once owned and perhaps consulted by Catherine Tollemache, is a small volume of sixty-four unruled paper leaves. On these leaves, a late fifteenth-century cursive hand has drawn diagrams for a decorative herb garden; recorded information on falconry and on the appropriate methods for fishing at certain times of year; given instructions for how to “restour a dofecote” and how to measure the appropriate lengths of cloth for a man’s shirt; copied directions for braiding silk threads into trims and ribbons; and noted appropriate methods for the planting and grafting of vines and fruit trees. Besides these Middle English instructions which readily call to mind the business of running a late medieval country manor house, the compiler has also recorded two groupings of charms and magical recipes. Some of these recipes instruct on remarkable feats, such as how to become invisible, how to learn a woman’s secrets while she sleeps, how to escape from a shark, or how to catch a snake bare-handed, while others pertain to more mundane matters such as how to stop bleeding, how to remove warts, or how to grow parsley in two hours.

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15 The manuscript remains in the private possession of the Tollemache family at Helmingham Hall, Suffolk. All references to _The Tollemache Book_ in this article are to the facsimile edition; see Griffiths, Edwards, and Barker, _The Tollemache Book of secrets_, 1–2. The editors of _The Tollemache Book_ do not include the exact dimensions of the manuscript in their edition.

16 Griffiths, Edwards, and Barker, 43, 45, 57, 61–9, 76–110, 112.

17 Griffiths, Edwards, and Barker, 46–52, 69.
Though many of these charms and magical recipes are recorded in Latin, the language is very simple and the syntax occasionally wonky.\(^{18}\)

The wide-ranging combination of various entries pertaining to the running of a late medieval estate, coupled with the consistent use of East Anglian spelling, suggests that *The Tollemache Book* was created by a member of the household for the family’s use.\(^{19}\) This amateur scribe hypothesis is further supported by numerous recipes within the manuscript for book-making techniques: a recipe for book glue which may have been used as a component of another set of instructions to glue torn leaves, a recipe to make red wax, several recipes for black and colored inks, and a list of colors used for limning with corresponding prices.\(^{20}\) The contents of the book would have appealed to both men and women within the Tollemache household. The young men of the house may have referenced the instructions related to falconry and fishing, while the matron of the estate may have turned to the instructions for braiding or hand-weaving silk threads into ribbons: “A lace endentyd. Take 3 bowis of on colour & set hem on A & C lyfte & on B right & 2 bowis of another colour of B left & on C right & wark as in the rownd lace of .5. bowis.”\(^{21}\)

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\(^{18}\) For example, a recipe to make invisible letters appear, “Ad faciendum litteras non apparentes appar[er]e accipe sepum rubeum,” (“To make letters not appearing to appear take red tallow”) uses an imperative of the verb (*appare*) instead of the infinitive (*apparere*). Note that Griffiths’s transcription reads the passage as “apparientes” and “appar[re].” I am not convinced of this transcription, but if it is correct, then the recipe’s syntax even more clearly indicates the scribe’s unfamiliarity with Latin, as *apparire* is not a recognized verb in medieval Latin. See Griffiths, Edwards, and Barker, 48, 124.

\(^{19}\) Griffiths, Edwards, and Barker, xviii.

\(^{20}\) Griffiths, Edwards, and Barker, 44, 52–6, 58–60.

\(^{21}\) Griffiths, Edwards, and Barker, 79.
These recipes for silk-braiding are especially noteworthy within *The Tollemache Book of Secrets* because they instruct on the medieval craft of “throwing silk,” or converting raw silk into yarn and weaving this silk into ribbons, laces, and trims—a craft traditionally performed by women. The craft was powerful and very lucrative in fifteenth-century England, a means by which “many a worshipfull woman […] have lyved full honourably, and therwith many good housethouldes kept.” Between 1300 and 1500, at least one hundred and twenty-three silkwomen worked as craftswomen in London, and court records reveal that women in Coventry, York, and Nottingham were also engaged in silk-braiding. But despite records of numerous silkwomen in medieval England, silkbraiding recipes survive in only two fifteenth-century practical collections: *The Tollemache Book of Secrets* and British Library Harley MS 2320.

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Whereas the material form of *The Tollemache Book*—the unruled leaves, the heterogeneous content, the neat but not necessarily professional hand—invites us to imagine the organic compilation of useful information by a member of the Tollemache household, the Harley miscellany exemplifies more formal traditions of manuscript production. Instead of paper, the Harley miscellany is composed on seventy-four parchment leaves, each of which is neatly ruled with wide margins. It predates *The Tollemache Book* by about fifty years, originating sometime in the first or second quarter of the fifteenth-century. Following a typical calendar of feast days, the manuscript contains a book of “nativities,” predicting the disposition, health, and wealth of men and women born under each zodiac sign; a verse prognostication, or *storia lunae* that instructs on “what tyme hyt ys good seson all thynges for to do” based on the “sygnes of the moone”; and finally, a shorter version of the same directions for silk braiding found in *The Tollemache Book*. Save for the opening calendar, each of these entries is copied in the same professional Gothic book hand. In addition to the continuity of the scribal

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26 Though the gist of these nativities is similar to the nativities frequently found accompanying “The Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy,” it is not the same text. For more on this genre, see Carrie Griffin, ed., *The Middle English “Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy”: A Parellel-Text Edition. Edited from London, British Library, MS Sloane 2453 with a Parallel Text from New York, Columbia University, MA Plimpton 260*, Middle English Texts 47 (Heidelberg: Winter, 2013).

27 BL Harley MS 2320, ff. 1–4, 5–30, 31–52r, and 52–70v, respectively.

28 The calendar at the opening of the Harley miscellany appears to have been created separately from the rest of the MS. The calendar is missing its first two leaves (January–April). The existing first leaf is badly damaged, however, suggesting that it acted as the
hand, catchwords between quires, similarities in pen work decoration throughout the manuscript, and three historiated initials of the same style (ff. 5r, 31r, 52r), confirming that these instructional treatises were meant to function as a cohesive whole. 29

Here then, is an entirely different sort of practical book, one that appears to have been created by a professional stationer for a wealthy patron, who—on account of the silk-braiding recipes—was likely a woman. And yet, while the circumstances of its creation may have been different from the more informal style of *The Tollemache Book*, reader marks and additions throughout the Harley manuscript suggest that it was used in similar ways. The neat and professional layout of the Harley miscellany did not prevent later readers from adding recipes and notes on the blank but ruled leaves at the end of the manuscript: a short set of annual prognostications by dominical letter in a late medieval book hand; two recipes, one for an herbal tincture to “destrye corrypcyon” and another, a “medecyn for the moder,” in a fifteenth-century cursive script; and a short table of contents and another two recipes in seventeenth-century scripts. 30 Midway through the manuscript, under the prognostication for men born in the sign of Virgo, a sixteenth-century hand has written “Born the 5 of September 1552 in the morn Richerd Havell Richerd Hooper Maud Derrye.” 31

Though the Harley miscellany and *The Tollemache Book* are the only two

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29 The calendar at the opening of the Harley miscellany appears to have been created separately from the rest of the MS. The calendar is missing its first two leaves (January–April). The existing first leaf is badly damaged, however, suggesting that it acted as the cover of the MS for some time, which makes it likely that it was bound together with the rest of the manuscript in the medieval era.

30 BL Harley MS 2320, ff. 71r, 73r–74r.

31 BL Harley MS 2320, f. 19v.
medieval English manuscripts to contain instructions on silk-braiding, the rest of the practical material found in these two miscellanies circulated widely in late medieval England. For example, British Library Sloane MS 1315, a manuscript of 132 paper leaves, has numerous categories of “practical knowledge” in common with both collections. Like the Harley miscellany, the Sloane manuscript begins with a calendar containing information on feast days and a table to help the reader calculate dates pre- and post-Ides. Unlike the Harley manuscript, however, the Sloane calendar indicates auspicious days for bloodletting in addition to feast days and Roman dates. Following the calendar is a treatise on the “Thirty-Two Perilous Days” on which one should not let blood, contract an illness, or begin a journey; a dietary, or regimen of food and drink ordered by month; and then a series of prognostications, first, by day of birth from Sunday to Saturday and then by zodiac sign. Following those entries is a storia lunae verse prognostication from the lunar cycle. Though it is not identical to the version in the Harley miscellany, its daily prognostications and corresponding biblical framework

32 In its modern binding, the Sloane manuscript contains what were originally two separate fifteenth-century codices of paper, the second of which is under discussion here. The first MS, ff. 2–15, is on smaller paper leaves than the second MS, and also contains a practical text, the “Book of Kervyng & Nortur,” a verse on the appropriate conduct and manners of household servants. It is copied in a book hand rather than the cursive hand(s) of the remainder of the MS. There is some question as to whether Sloane 1315 is actually three manuscripts, with the second and third (ff. 16–152) originating with the same scribe. What looks like a contemporary hand has paginated ff. 68–152 separately, supporting the argument that there are three MSS in total bound together. However, on closer examination, the number 1 written in the center of the upper margin of folio 68 is mirrored on the upper margin of folio 67v, suggesting that the wet ink transferred when the pagination was done, and thus, that the two manuscripts were always bound together. One possibility for this separate pagination is that ff. 68–152 contain mostly recipes, and thus the pagination may have been designed to facilitate an index.

33 BL Sloane MS 1315, ff. 16v–22v; I cite the foliation numbers for BL MS Sloane 1315 in its entirety, meaning that the MS under study here begins on folio 16.

34 BL Sloane MS 1315, ff. 29v–32r, 33r–48v.
are remarkably similar. Finally, this section of prognostications closes with an annual verse prognostication according to Christmas Day.

The remainder of the Sloane manuscript shifts to recipe-like practical texts: a short series of directions on when best to take certain medicines, and an herbal—an alphabetical list of useful medical herbs with descriptions of their “virtues” and brief instructions on how they should be used—followed by a lengthy collection of medical recipes and charms. Like The Tollemache Book, the Sloane manuscript is overwhelmingly copied in Middle English, save for a few charms and magical recipes in Latin, and again as in The Tollemache Book, the syntax within the Latin passages does not suggest a learned user. Many of the magical recipes in the Sloane miscellany are also found in The Tollemache Book: recipes “To make a woman to tell her cowncell in her slepe,” to “handell a serpant,” and to “make parsely sede to growe Wyche in an owre to be kutt.” And again echoing The Tollemache Book, the Sloane manuscript features

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35 BL Sloane MS 1315, ff. 49–64. Several different storiae lunae, in verse and prose, circulated in late medieval England, all of them closely related. See Taavitsainen, “Storia Lune and Its Paraphrase in Prose: Two Versions of a Middle English Lunary.”
36 BL Sloane MS 1315, ff. 65–67.
37 BL Sloane MS 1315, ff. 68–69v, 70–87v, 88v–149r.
38 For example, one charm’s heading reads “To habere mulierem amorem,” (fol. 93r), which both combines English and Latin (“To” and “habere”) and mistakenly uses the accusative singular “mulierem” (woman) instead of the genitive plural “mulierum” (of women), so that the passage literally translates as “To to have woman love.” Numerous other love charms are sprinkled throughout the recipe section of BL Sloane MS 1315. See folios 94r, 97r, 104–5v, 106v–110v, and 111r–12r. For more on love magic in fifteenth-century English manuscripts, see Laura Theresa Mitchell, “Cultural Uses of Magic in Fifteen-Century England” (PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto (Canada), 2011), 76; Catherine Rider, “Women, Men, and Love Magic in Late Medieval English Pastoral Manuals,” Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft 7, no. 2 (2012): 190–211, https://doi.org/10.1353/mrw.2012.0016.
39 BL Sloane MS 1315, ff. 93r–v, 94r, 97r, 115r, 116r. For similar versions in The Tollemache Book, see Griffiths, Edwards, and Barker, 48–51.
codicological and color-making recipes, including one to make red wax, one to make “glewe for wreters,” and several more to make gold, silver, white, and blue colors for cutlers or painters. Finally, like both manuscripts discussed above, marginalia and later additions to Sloane MS 1315 illustrate how this repository of useful knowledge was referenced well into the early modern era. A discerning late sixteenth- or seventeenth-century reader has written, “This is very good” alongside the entry for “mylfoyle” in the manuscript’s herbal, but that same reader was far less approving of an “experiment […] callyd the Abraham ys eye,” under which is written “evill this.” The final four folios are filled with recipes added in a later early modern hand, including a section on “Six precious waters made by Ypocaras and sent to a queen sometime in England.”

The Sloane miscellany falls somewhere between *The Tollemache Book* and Harley miscellany in terms of its production. The entirety of the manuscript is copied in a neat fifteenth-century cursive hand, but very minor changes to the hand throughout the manuscript suggest either that it was compiled over time or that more than one hand was at work. Even though the margins of the paper leaves have been cordoned off with neat lines, in several places script becomes increasingly cramped as the scribe moves down the page. Recipes and treatises do feature rubricated headings and some rather unsophisticated penwork, but folio 112v waits for a “vein man” illustration that was never completed. Thus, the Sloane manuscript is neither the obvious work of a stationer’s workshop nor the obvious compilation of an amateur. It is not a manuscript intended for

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40 BL Sloane MS 1315, ff. 92v, 95r–96r.
41 BL Sloane MS 1315, ff. 82r, 98r.
42 BL Sloane MS 1315, ff. 149–50r.
43 Mooney is likewise unsure of whether folios 16–152 of Sloane 1315 are the product of one or several very similar hands; see “Practical Didactic Works in Middle English,” 506.
display, but neither does it contain much evidence that it was used in a stillroom. Like many other late medieval practical manuscripts that inhabit this middle ground between formal production and informal composition, the manuscript contains few clues about the person for whom it was created.

Occasionally, however, as in case of the final manuscript under consideration here, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1389, the book reveals a bit about its compiler. The Ashmole miscellany, a manuscript of 123 paper leaves, is the first of two codices now bound together in a seventeenth-century binding. It begins with a short passage on apothecaries’ weights and then continues with an unfinished table of contents to the collection of medical recipes that follows. Folios 18 and 19 may originally have been left blank for later additions, like the recipes “to make a triacoll fyn” and “to make a dowlbet of fensce,” which now partially fill those pages. As in both the Sloane miscellany and The Tollemache Book, charms and magical recipes are copied in English or unsophisticated Latin. There is a recipe to make men or women take off their clothes (“Ad faciendum homines & mulieres deponere pannos suos”), another “For to make men to dawnc,” and another “For to seme þat a mans hed ys of[f].” But these magical recipes share the same page with more obviously practical directions, like one for cleaning

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44 Like the Sloane miscellany, the second manuscript of Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389 also contains “practical texts,” including a glossary of Latin herbal terms and a treatise on weights and measures, but there is no evidence of the two manuscripts having been bound together before their purchase by the library in 1692–93. My thanks go to Andrew Honey, book conservator at the Bodleian Library, for providing references to the Bodleian’s purchase and for sharing his expertise on the two manuscripts’ binding history.

45 Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, ff. 1–8v (2r–8v blank), 9–18r.

46 Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, ff. 20–21r.
“stenyd clothe” and another for a “glu þat wyll not losse for fyre or water.”

The following two folios contain still more useful and hands-on knowledge: a treatise on fishing, a recipe to “take wylde geese,” another to “take fyshe,” and finally, a lengthy treatise on how to write on a “sverd” or “any other thynge þat ys maade of yrkon or stelle.” These directions are followed by still more medical recipes; a series of astrological entries on the humoral qualities of the planets; an explanation on how “to know what planet reyneth every owere” of the seven days of the week; a prognostication on when best to “take a jorne” in every sign; and notes and tables on the movement of the astrological signs. The remainder of the Ashmole manuscript is nearly entirely filled with medical recipes, from unguents to salves to plasters to remedies for toothache, broken bones, or festered wounds.

Though medical recipes are common in late medieval practical miscellanies, those in the Ashmole manuscript are unusual: the scribe has recorded precise measurements for ingredients used in various cures, and, rarer still, these measurements are frequently written in a shorthand of symbols used by apothecaries to stand for certain weights, like a scruple or a drachm. None of the medical recipes in either the Harley or Sloane miscellanies use apothecaries’ symbols for denoting units of measurement, instead relying on general terms like a “handful” or “spoonful,” if they give any measurement at all. The specificity of the recipes in the Ashmole miscellany makes sense, however, in light of a simple note added at the bottom of detailed list of ingredients for a recipe for

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47 Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, ff. 20–21v.  
48 Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, ff. 22r–24r.  
49 Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, ff. 24v–31r, 33r–34v.  
50 Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, ff. 36v–123.
“Pellet of Antioch”: “This I have moche used and lovyd, for with it I helyd þe scheryff of Brystowe.”\textsuperscript{51} The note, coupled with a signature and endorsement written under a recipe for the pox—“probatum est per me W Aderston”—makes clear that this miscellany was compiled by a practicing physician.\textsuperscript{52}

This individual may very well have been the “William Aderston, of London, surgeon” listed as the plaintiff in a trespassing case against the Sheriffs of London registered sometime between 1490 and 1510.\textsuperscript{53} A recipe for a “goode remedy for þe new dyse yese [disease] of þe hede & stomake & swete with Payne in þe bake”—probably a remedy for the sweating sickness—corroborates a composition date of later than 1485, around the time when this William Aderston would have been practicing his trade in London.\textsuperscript{54} But while the compiler behind the Ashmole miscellany was likely a professional healer, he was certainly an amateur scribe. The unruled paper leaves of the manuscript are filled to the edges with a late fifteenth-century cursive script that occasionally verges on sloppy, and there is no rubrication or decoration anywhere within the miscellany. Partially filled leaves and blank spaces throughout illustrate how this compiler intended to leave room for the addition of more useful information which he knew he would accumulate in his comings and goings in the bustling environs of London.

\textsuperscript{51} Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, f. 61r.
\textsuperscript{52} Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, f. 14r.
\textsuperscript{54} Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, f. 37v. The sweating sickness first appeared in England in 1485.
These four late medieval practical miscellanies were chosen for close comparison because they represent a wide range of the sort of useful knowledge that might be found within a late medieval recipe book. In addition, they reflect a wide range of manuscript production, from the commissioned and professionally produced Harley miscellany, to the semi-professional but hardly ornate Sloane miscellany, to amateur compilations in *The Tollemache Book* and Ashmole manuscript. Despite their wide-ranging content and the various methods of their production, close comparison of these four miscellanies has revealed that often the same recipes and treatises—or very similar riffs on the same subjects—appear repeatedly. Though there are substantive differences between individual practical texts across these exemplars, there is a consistency to the themes and concerns that these collections address.

But the similarities of form and content shared among these four exemplars can be extended to include a much broader selection of practical manuscripts. The 107 other practical manuscripts consulted for this chapter, listed in Appendix B, are remarkably cohesive as a group. First, as a group these manuscripts *look* a great deal alike. All but five are quarto-sized, or around 200 x 150 mm, but some are truly pocket-sized, down to the smallest at 107 x 78 mm. Sixty-two are wholly made of paper and eight are constructed from paper and parchment, leaving thirty-seven miscellanies on parchment alone. Their size and the choice of materials used suggests that recipe collections were not the sort of book that called for a great deal of expenditure, and that readers may have designed these books to be useful, portable, and readily accessible.

55 For exact dimensions of all ninety-nine manuscripts consulted for this chapter, see Appendix B.
Second, these manuscripts are alike in terms of content. As might be expected, the greatest number contain entries pertaining to healing and medical preparation: ninety-five of 107 contain medical recipes and forty-six contain an herbal. While medical texts frequently form the backbone of these practical collections, other categories of useful knowledge also crop up regularly: forty-four feature magic or charms; nineteen directions for inks or colors; twenty-five contain a cookery or dietary; twenty-one contain treatises on agriculture or animal husbandry; eighteen contain prognostications; five contain instructions for hawking, hunting, or fishing; and eight contain recipes for textile work.56

These categories of knowledge most commonly found in fifteenth-century miscellanies reflect the everyday activities of late medieval men and women. They would have planted, harvested, healed, woven, sewn, hunted, fished, and cooked in order to survive.

Interestingly, however, these categories of knowledge also bear a striking resemblance to those enumerated by earlier medieval philosophers. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, thanks to an influx of Aristotelian writings, western medieval thinkers were for the first time concerned with incorporating “worldly” knowledge into a Latin Christian epistemology. They discovered that Aristotle had devised a hierarchy of knowledge that emphasized technē, or mechanical skill, as the first step in a continuum that led to praxis, or action, and eventually episteme, or thought.57 In an attempt to reconcile a pre-Christian schema with Latin Christian traditions of monastic learning, twelfth- and thirteenth-century scholars devised a new hierarchy included the artes mechanicae, or mechanical arts, as the lowest tier in a four-part epistemology that moved

56 See Appendix B for a detailed list of which manuscripts contain which of these categories.
57 Long, Openness, Secrecy, Authorship, 16–45.
from the worldly to the divine.\textsuperscript{58} The seven sub-categories that made up the \textit{artes mechanicae}, according to Robert Kilwardby, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1270 to 1277, were medicine, fabric-making, armaments, construction, farming, cooking, and commercial navigation.\textsuperscript{59}

It would be difficult to prove that the late medieval compilers of practical vernacular miscellanies were intimately familiar with a thirteenth-century cleric’s enumeration of what, exactly, constituted “practical knowledge,” or the \textit{artes mechanicae}. And yet, the contents of the manuscripts surveyed for this chapter do conform to Kilwardby’s classifications. This correspondence could be explained by the fact that many vernacular instructional treatises and recipes were translated from Latinate collections copied in monastic settings by men who were familiar with Kilwardby’s \textit{De ortu scientiarum}. Whatever the reason for this classificatory scheme remaining intact from the thirteenth century to the fifteenth century, the result was that fifteenth-century compilers created practical miscellanies that were overwhelmingly cohesive in form and content.

If we cannot in good faith argue that late medieval compilers understood the philosophical underpinnings of the \textit{artes mechanicae}, why did they continue to reproduce this classification in their manuscripts? There is the obvious explanation: the same

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categories of useful knowledge drove everyday life in 1400 as in 1250. Late medieval users compiled information on cooking, agriculture, medicine, and textile production because they needed such information at hand. In an era of epidemic disease and sudden mortality, readers had an obvious need for medical recipes that promised cures for common ailments, not to mention prognostications that reassured them about their health and well-being for the coming year. It is not hard to imagine why readers needed recipes for ink or book glue, or why country gentlemen appreciated advice on the proper techniques for fishing or equine care. And yet, though it is easy enough to understand why medieval readers wanted access to all this information, what is less obvious is how these readers used all of this practical knowledge once it was compiled. While the collections were undoubtedly useful, were they actually used?

Unfortunately, these manuscripts contain very little evidence that they were consulted in stillrooms, kitchens, or workshops, and in fact, their very composition mitigates against reading these manuscripts as straightforward “how-to” books. First, medieval readers simply did not use their practical manuscripts as workshop notebooks. When recipes are marked with commentary, like those in the Sloane miscellany (“This is good” or “Evill this”), the notations tend to come from much later sixteenth- or seventeenth-century hands. Second, the tremendous repetition of recipes and treatises within these collections goes unremarked upon by late medieval readers. For example, folios 111v–112r of the Sloane miscellany contain three recipes “To do away here [hair]” copied one right after the other. Likewise, despite William Aderston’s concern for specificity in the quantities of ingredients to be used within his recipes, he copied three recipes “For swellyng of ē membryt [member]” one after the other onto a single leaf of
his miscellany. Neither of these manuscripts offers any interpretive guidance as to why a reader might choose one recipe over the other. The titles for subsequent recipes are simply “Alia modo,” or, “For the same.” This repetition is not confined to recipes either: practical miscellanies often contain several different versions of competing prognostications. If prognostications were supposed to guide a reader’s actions, then conflicting predictions on when to let blood or begin a journey would pose a problem. Yet there is very little evidence that readers were bothered by what frequently amounted to contradictory advice, or that they were concerned about determining which recipe yielded the best result.

Finally, most medieval recipes are not described as the product of hands-on experience, and in fact are only rarely attributed to an identifiable figure. When they are attributed to an authority, that expert is most likely to be an ancient figure like Galen or Hippocrates, whose wisdom was drawn from books, not garnered by experience. The prologue to one collection of medical recipes explains that it has been “drawen oute of þe bookes of Galyen and Ypocras and Socrates and Ascopus, the whiche weren þe best leches in her tyme þat weren in alle þis worlde.” Even if a practical treatise could not

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60 Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, f. 44r.
61 For example, Cambridge University Library MS Ee.1.15 contains two different and contradictory treatises on the lucky and unlucky days of the month, ff. 6r–v and 12r–14v.
63 See, BL Royal MS 17 A.xxxii, f. 43. Very similar versions of this prologue are found in BL MSS Royal 18 A.vi, f. 1, and Sloane 393, f. 13r.
claim a direct lineage from a recognized ancient source, a vaguely ancient provenance would sometimes do, as in the “Wise Book of Astronomy and Philosophy,” which describes its author as “an Englyshman full wise and well yvnderstonde of Philosophie and astronomy, the whiche made and compiled this boke out of Grewe [Greek] into Englisshe graciously.” There are exceptions to this general premise, of course, as in William Aderston’s medical miscellany, but most recipe collections present themselves as compendia of received wisdom from venerable sources rather than the products of hands-on experience.

Considering the repetitive nature of these collections and their frequent reference to ancient expertise over hands-on experience, it is safe to conclude the purpose of these manuscripts was not to foster the production of new knowledge. These manuscripts were imagined as tools of collection, places to gather all the bits of useful knowledge that fit within a shared understanding of the “practical manuscript” as a particular kind of book. The useful knowledge contained within those pages could be wide-ranging—from textile recipes to cookery to hunting to medicine—and yet the same wide-ranging categories appear side by side again and again in these collections. It could be argued that late medieval readers were the inheritors of a much older tradition that compartmentalized “useful” or “worldly” knowledge apart from other modes of writing. Indeed, close similarities in size, materials, content, and format among late medieval miscellanies

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64 BL MS Royal 17 A.xxxii, fol. 8r; the same prologue appears in Bodleian MS Ashmole 1477, pt. 3, fol. 1v.
65 Aderston records a recipe for “A goode experiment for þe frencche pox & well provyd by gefferye barbar of exceter,” Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, f. 73v.
suggests that compilers had clear ideas about which categories of knowledge “fit” within a particular kind of manuscript designed to hold a particular kind of knowledge.

Thanks to rising literacy rates and cheaper book-making materials, popular practical texts were copied over and over again throughout the fifteenth century in growing numbers of practical miscellanies, and every new manuscript containing similar texts that addressed the same themes further reinforced the notion that there was a defined “corpus” of “practical knowledge.” Compilers determined which texts to include in their manuscripts based on what was available for copying, and what was most often available for copying were those texts most often chosen by compilers. The mutually reinforcing cycle perpetuated itself so that the copying and recopying of various texts reinforced the conventions of the new genre. Perhaps unwittingly, through selection of the same useful texts, late medieval readers reiterated the classificatory schemes of twelfth- and thirteenth-century theologians. Thus, the development of the vernacular miscellany helped readers to see recipes for medicine, agriculture, animal husbandry, cooking, sewing, hawking, hunting, and book-making as parts of a whole, a complete body of knowledge handed down over generations, which might be theirs too if collected in the leaves of their own personal practical book.

II. The press and the practical book

In 1476, William Caxton brought the printing press to England, and with it, a new means of circulating various established texts from within this corpus of practical knowledge. In 1485, William Machlinia published the first printed practical book in English, a “litil boke the whiche traytied and reherced many gode thinges necessaries for
The following year the Saint Albans printer published a treatise on hawking and hunting, and in 1490, William Caxton printed the *Gouernayle of helthe*, a dietary and health regimen. It was not until after 1491, however, when Wynkyn de Worde took over the operation of Caxton’s press, that practical books became regular publications. For the most part, De Worde’s shop at the “sygne of the Sunne” controlled the market for practical books up through the second decade of the sixteenth century. In addition to issuing his own editions of already popular works like the Book of Saint Albans (1496), *The governall of helthe* (1506), *The boke of cokery* (1510), and *A treatyse agaynst pestelence* (1509 and 1511), De Worde also published new practical works: the *Proprytees & medicynes of hors* (1497 and 1502), the *Boke of husbandry* (1508), the *Boke of kervynge* (1508 and 1513), and *The crafte of graffynge & plantynge of trees* (1518).
All of these practical books were simply printed versions of texts widely available in medieval manuscripts. De Worde was looking for guaranteed sellers, so why not turn to an already popular corpus of practical texts? It is thus no surprise that De Worde’s early printed practical books look a great deal like those in manuscript collections. All of De Worde’s editions listed above, with the exception of the *Book shewyth the manere of hawkynge & huntynge*, were printed in quarto as pamphlets of no more than twelve pages. De Worde seems to have recognized that he would do well to make these texts available to a wide readership at a low cost. His success would hinge on the quantity of his sales rather than the quality of his editions. Indeed, what little evidence survives of early sixteenth-century book sales confirms that these works were sold cheaply. The sales recorded for the year 1520 by John Dorne, an Oxford bookseller, confirm that buyers paid between one and two pence for unbound copies of *The boke of cokery*, *The boke of keruynge, Proprytees & medicynes of hors*, and the *Boke of husbandry*.  

This puts practical books at the same price point as two printed ballads, or somewhere between a quarter and a fifth of a day’s wages for a laborer in Oxford or London.

To stay afloat in the market for cheap practical books, printers needed to attract readers to come back for more. Almost from the moment practical books were printed in England, printers worked to find ways to draw readers’ attention to their particular

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70 Dorne sold two copies each of the *Medicine for hors*, the *Boke of Kervinge*, and the *Boke of Cokery*, and one copy of the *Boke of Husbandry*; see, Madan, “Day-Book of John Dorne, Bookseller in Oxford, A.D. 1520,” 72–177.

edition. As it turns out, one of the first practical books printed in England was also the very first book printed with a title page. William Machlinia’s publication of a book of “gode things necessaries for the infirmite & grete sekenesse called pestilence” was likely a response to the first outbreak of sweating sickness in 1485, and with every one of his three reissues in that year, Machlinia tweaked the treatise’s presentation, gradually moving from a sentence-long title within the text block of the first page, to a short title on the first page of text, to finally, a stand-alone title page.\textsuperscript{72} Shortly thereafter, Wynkyn de Worde began to experiment with using woodcuts on these title pages, images which served to entice passers-by with visual representation of his various works.\textsuperscript{73} For example, the 1497 edition of Proprytees & medycines of hors features an image of a horse and its master, the 1508 edition of the Boke of husbandry shows two men tending an orchard (fig. 3.1), and the 1508 edition of The boke of keruynge depicts a well-to-do men and women at a banquet table (fig. 3.2).\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{72} Here begynneth a litil boke the whiche traytied and reherced many gode thinges necessaries for the infirmite & grete sekenesse called pestilence; Here begynneth a litill boke necessaraye & behouefull agenst the pestilence, STC 4590, EEBO (London: W. de Machlinia, 1485); A passing gode lityll boke necessaraye & behouefull agenst the pestilence, STC 4591, EEBO (London: W. de Machlinia, 1485). For more on the publication history of Machlinia’s treatise, see Keiser, “Two Medieval Plague Treatises and Their Afterlife in Early Modern England,” 318–9.


\textsuperscript{74} On the illustrated title page of De Worde’s 1497 edition of Proprytees & medicynes of hors, see Margaret Lane Ford, “A New Addition to the Corpus of English Incunabula: Wynkyn de Worde’s Proprytees & Medicynes of Hors (c. 1497–98),” The Library 2, no. 1 (March 2001): 3n1, https://doi.org/10.1093/library/2.1.3.
Figure 3.1: Woodcut on title page, *Boke of husbandry* (1508), sig. A.i. Image published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

Figure 3.2: Woodcut on title page, *The boke of keruynge* (1508), sig. A.i. Image published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.
Unlike practical manuscripts, which featured a variety of recipes, treatises, and directions within a single codex, these printed treatises on husbandry, cooking, or medicine were separated into individual imprints. Readers chose from categories of practical knowledge which were separated in ways that make sense now—medical recipes alongside plague treatises, animal husbandry alongside hunting, cooking alongside rules of etiquette for the table—but which mark a substantial shift from the presentation of practical knowledge in manuscript. The combination of a short title with an image that served as an emblem of the book’s contents helped readers to easily identify these separate categories of practical knowledge and distinguish one practical work from another. And, because practical books were usually sold unbound, these titles and images were readily visible to consumers strolling through the booksellers’ neighborhood around St. Paul’s. It should be noted, however, that despite these early innovations in title pages and the marketing of practical books, the titles of these works are not “catchy,” so to speak, but simply informative, i.e. Here begynneth the boke of keruynge. In addition, neither Machlinia, Caxton, De Worde, nor Pynson presented any of these early printed practical works as theirs, either in the sense that the texts were their compositions, or in the sense that these texts were unique to their press. In the first three decades of English print when there was still relatively little competition in the book trade, and when medieval manuscripts were still as prevalent among English readers as printed books, no such claim was necessary or even conceivable.

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75 The Oxford bookseller Dorne was careful to mark which of his books were sold “ligatum,” or bound, but none of the practical works he sold are marked as such; see Madan, “Day-Book of John Dorne, Bookseller in Oxford, A.D. 1520,” 72–177.
As competition among printers grew, however, the financial realities of a speculative book market forced a change in the way printers thought about the texts they printed. In 1518, Richard Pynson, official printer to King Henry VIII by that time, became the first to receive a royal privilege for the exclusive right to print specific titles for a period of two years. The first two practical books printed “cum privilegio a rege indulto” were a prognostication for 1520 from Jasper Laet, the popular astrologer from Antwerp, and a new book of husbandry, titled *Here begynneth a newe tracte or treatyse moost profitable for all husbandmen*, printed in 1523. Neither were drawn directly from medieval manuscript sources. Pynson’s 1523 treatise on husbandry was, in fact, an original work by John Fitzherbert and not a reprint of the 1508 De Worde edition of the *Boke of husbandry*. This point is worth making because up until that time, with the exception of annual almanacs or prognostications, none of the practical books printed in English were compositions made expressly for print.

Did the royal privilege encourage printers to seek “new” texts to print, or did an increase in the number of “new” texts created just for print encourage the development of royal privilege? The causal relationship may be impossible to determine, but one thing is certain: following the introduction of royal privilege, novelty appears for the first time touted on the title pages of printed practical books. According to the English Short Title Catalogue, prior to 1518 there were only three books published in English that claimed to

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be “new,” none of which were practical books. In the 1520s alone, twenty-four books were published in England with titles or subtitles that advertised novelty, eight times as many as in the entire forty-three-year period from the introduction of the press to the introduction of the royal privilege. After 1518, even popular and widely circulating works dating from the medieval era, like Chaucer’s *Canterbury tales, dilygently & truly corrected & newly printed*, were published with subtitles advertising the edition as novel or even superior to copies in scribal circulation.

And yet, creating the appearance of novelty in the world of practical knowledge posed a particular problem. Practical books were repositories of information that was durable and diffuse. How could a printer argue that his was a “trewe” copy of a practical work if the sources for these texts were mostly anonymous and varied tremendously from manuscript to manuscript? How could a printer call recipes and instructional works “newe” when they claimed authority through fidelity to principles established by ancient authorities? Such texts did not lend themselves to reinvention. John Fitzherbert’s “new” treatise on husbandry can be called such because he vastly expanded on the version printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1508, a thirteenth-century treatise composed by Walter

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78 Books printed before 1520 that claim novelty in their titles are STC nos. 1510 and 15724; 4602. Two other single-sheet publications announced themselves as “newe”: the first, a royal proclamation published by Wynkyn de Worde in 1509 (STC 7761.7), and the second, a papal indulgence printed by Richard Pynson in 1517 (STC 14077c.58).
79 STC nos. 12046; 20722; 25982; 15725.5, 15726, 15727, and 15729; 7260; 1696; 20721; 13175.1 and 13175.2; 23880 and 23880.5; 18389, 18390, and 18391; 5086; 5096; 24199; 14871; 13435; and 9519.
81 Recall the incipit to the medical recipe collection which claims to originate in the “bookes of Galyen and Ypocras and Socrates and Ascopus” found in BL MSS Royal MS 17 A.xxxii, f. 43, Royal 18 A.vi, f. 1, and Sloane 393, f. 13r,
de Henley. Even still, there are echoes of the earlier work throughout Fitzherbert’s sixteenth-century treatise. For example, chapter four of de Henley’s *Boke of husbandry* (as printed by Wynkyn de Worde) outlines the merits of using a team of oxen over a team of horses to plow a field, and—because neither horses, oxen, nor the expense involved in caring for one animal over the other had changed substantially in the three hundred years between husbandry treatises—John Fitzherbert repeats nearly identical advice.\(^8^2\) In a similar vein, historians of vernacular English medicine have documented how the first century of popular medical print was deeply conservative, with printed collections featuring repackaged versions of medieval-era recipes or treatises.\(^8^3\)

As the figures in Table 3.1 demonstrate, it took several decades after the development of the royal privilege for printers to fully embrace novelty as a marketing technique for practical books. Only gradually did printers adapt to the development of a commercial market where novelty was a benefit rather than a detriment to the authority of a practical text. Even if most of the recipes and instructions found in printed practical books were simply repackaged versions of knowledge that circulated in script, a “newly corrected and amended” version might still attract new readers. It was this “repackaging” of centuries-old practical knowledge which would become the hallmark of practical print over the next several decades.

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<th>Author and Title</th>
<th>1520–29</th>
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<th>1540–49</th>
<th>1550–59</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Banckes, <em>Treasure of Pore Men</em></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brunschwig, <em>Vertuose Boke of Distyllacyon</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Various authors, Prognostications</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marcourt, <em>Boke of Marchauntes</em></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Benese, <em>Measuryng of all maner of lande</em></td>
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<td>Goeurot, <em>The Regiment of Life</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Rates of the Custome House</em></td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>A Propre New Booke of Cokery</em></td>
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<td>Boorde, <em>A Dyetary of Health</em></td>
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<td>Turner, <em>A new herball</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The kalendar of shepherds</em></td>
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<td>Bullein, <em>The government of health</em></td>
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</table>

Following quickly on the heels of Pynson’s 1523 publication of Fitzherbert’s “newe tract or treatyse moost profytable for all husbandmen,” Richard Banckes printed the “newe mater, the whiche sheweth and treateth of ye vertues & proprytes of herbes” (1525) and the “new boke of medecynes intytulyd or callyd the Treasure of pore men” (1526), both with royal privilege.\(^{84}\) Though these two volumes were the very first printed

\(^{84}\) *Here begynnyth a newe mater, the whiche sheweth and treateth of ye vertues & proprytes of herbes*, STC 13175.1, EEBO (London: Richard Banckes, 1525); *Here*
books in English to present medical recipes and herbal pharmacopeia, neither were truly “new.” Both were printed versions of texts common to fifteenth-century practical miscellanies. The *Vertues & proprytes of herbes* was a printed version of the *Agnus Castus* herbal, found in six of the practical vernacular miscellanies analyzed for this chapter. The recipes in Banckes’s remedy book, the *Treasure of pore men*, are the same recipes found repeatedly in manuscript collections. And, just like in those manuscript remedy books, redundancy is no problem: Banckes lists recipe after recipe for the same ailment under the headings “Another for the same.”

But Banckes’s printed versions of medieval practical knowledge do offer something that their manuscript sources do not: comprehensiveness. Not one of the five versions of the *Agnus Castus* herbal in the manuscripts analyzed for this chapter is complete. The manuscript versions of this alphabetized herbal all begin with *A* (*agnus castus*) but three manuscript versions end with *S* (*solatrum*), one with *Q* (*quinque folium*), one with *P* (*pulegium rurale*), and one with *L* (*lappa*). By contrast, Bancke’s *Vertues & proprytes of herbes* runs all the way from *A* to *W* (wormwood). Likewise, Banckes’s *Treasure of pore men* appears complete with a table of contents to the recipes in the book organized from head to foot. Some of the manuscript recipe collections examined for

_begynneth a newe boke of medecynes intytulyd or callyd the Treasure of pore men_, STC 24199 (London: Richard Banckes, 1526).

85 BL MSS Arundel 272, ff. 36r–62v; Royal 18 A.vi, ff. 64r–88v; Sloane 1315, ff. 70–81; Sloane 2460, ff. 2r–33v; Sloane 3489, ff. 12r–28r; and Wellcome Library MS 409, ff. 109r–144v.

86 Versions ending in *S* are BL MSS Arundel 272, fol. 62v; Sloane 2460, fol. 33v; and Sloane 3489, fol. 28r. BL MS Sloane 1315 ends at *Q* at fol. 87v; BL MS Royal 18 A.vi ends in *P* at fol. 87v; and Wellcome Library MS 409 ends with *L* at fol. 144v.

87 Ann Blair has argued that organizational innovations like the index or table of contents were responses to readers’ desires for easy access to the ever-growing wealth of information appearing in print; see Ann Blair, “Reading Strategies for Coping with
this chapter do feature tables of contents or indices, but manuscript compilers like William Aderston (who left room for a table of contents that was never completed) recognized that their collections could grow as more copy texts became available.\footnote{Information Overload ca. 1550-1700,” Journal of the History of Ideas 64, no. 1 (2003): 18–9.}

Fifteenth-century compilers did want to collect as much useful knowledge as they could to achieve “comprehensiveness,” but this desire was always at odds with attempts at organization. Because manuscript compilers lacked the luxury of knowing which texts would become available for copying at what time, recipes and directions appear in haphazard order in manuscript miscellanies, so that directives for preparing medicaments might appear alongside fabric-dyeing instructions or a treatise on fishing. But a printed book might go through several runs of hundreds of books, so it was worth a printer’s time and effort to locate, collate, and organize the wealth of practical knowledge from manuscript sources into what might be a “newly corrected and amended” printed edition. Printed collections of practical knowledge suggested to readers that comprehensiveness had finally been achieved, albeit within a single category of practical knowledge like medical recipes or herbal lore. Print was the medium through which knowledge might be ordered and fully apprehended.

In theory, the royal privilege should have protected a publisher’s efforts to present a “newly amended” edition of practical knowledge drawn from manuscript sources. In practice, however, this was not always the case, especially when it came to practical texts

\footnote{Twenty of the ninety-nine manuscripts surveyed for this article contain a table of contents, calendar of recipes, or index of some kind. See Appendix B for a table of the manuscripts’ characteristics. For William Aderston’s aborted attempt at a table of contents, see Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, fols. 2r–8v.}
as ubiquitous as medical recipes. Despite gaining royal privilege for the *Treasure of pore men* and *Vertues & proprytes of herbes*, Richard Banckes did not profit much from this effort to present herbal lore and medical recipes in print for the first time, though others certainly did. After publication of the *Treasure of pore men* in 1526, Banckes left the printing business and did not return until 1539. By the time he came back to the trade, his privilege for the two works had surely expired, and rival printers had published their own editions of these works. But these rivals could not secure their rights to the *Vertues & proprytes of herbes* or the *Treasure of pore men* any more than Banckes had. From the late 1530s until 1561, nine different printers would issue a total of sixteen editions of Banckes’s herbal. Ten different printers issued a total of thirteen editions of the *Treasure of pore men* from 1539 to 1601. By 1550, there were at least twenty-seven printed editions of medical recipes and another eleven printed herbals circulating on the English print market, in addition to scores of manuscript miscellanies with nearly identical entries being read and marked up by early modern readers.

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90 STC nos. 13175.4, 13175.5, 13175.6, 13175.7, 13175.8, 13175.8c, 13175.10, 13175.11, 13175.12, 13175.13, 13175.13c, 13175.15, 13175.16, 13175.17, 13175.18, and 13175.19.
91 STC nos. 24200, 24201, 24202, 24202.5, 24203, 24203.3, 24203.5, 24203.7, 24205, 24206a, 24206a.5, 24207, and 24207.3.
92 In addition to seven editions of the *Treasure of pore men*, there were also sixteen editions of Thomas Moulton’s *This is the myrour or glasse of helth* (STC nos. 18214a, 18214a.3, 18214a.5, 18214a.7, 18216, 18219, 18220, 18221, 18221a, 18221.3, 18221.5, 18221.7, 18222.5, 18225.2, 18225.4, and 18225.6) and four editions of *The antidotharius, in the whiche thou mayst lerne howe thou shale make plasters, salues, oynment, powders, bawmes, oyles & wound drnkes* (STC nos. 675.3, 675.7, 675a, and 675a.3) printed before 1550.
With so many competing editions of printed practical texts, how was a discerning reader to make sense of this glut of practical knowledge? By the 1550s, rival printers issuing competing editions of Banckes’s *Vertues & proprytes of herbes* appear to have decided that their edition might sell better if it was attached to a famous name.93 William Powell appended a new almanac by Anthony Askham, the popular English astrologer, to his 1550 edition of Banckes’s herbal and made sure that Askham’s name appeared prominently in the title of his “lytel herbal of the properties of herbes newly amended and corrected.”94 Robert Wyer aimed even higher in his edition of 1552. He claimed that his edition was “practysyd by Doctor Lynacro,” by which he meant Thomas Linacre, the renowned English humanist who was translator of Galen’s Greek texts, royal tutor to Prince Arthur, and founder of the Royal College of Physicians.95 In each case, the herbals attributed to Askham or Linacre were simply repackaged versions of Banckes’s 1525 edition. Their contents had been circulating among English readers in print for two decades and in manuscript for more than a century.

The derivative quality of sixteenth-century printed recipe books demonstrates the longevity and durability of the practical knowledge preserved in late medieval manuscripts, even as, paradoxically, early modern printers worked harder and harder to convince their readers that their practical books were something new. Importantly, these marketing techniques did more than simply sell books. Innovations to the presentation of

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94 *A lytel herbal of the propreties of herbes [...] by A. Askham*, STC 13175.13 and 13175.19. Askham’s name in the title stumped even the cataloguers of the *Short Title Catalogue*, who list this edition of Banckes’s herbal under Askham’s name.
95 *Macers herbal: Practysyd by Doctor Lynacro*, STC 13175.13c.
very old practical knowledge initiated a shift in reader’s expectations of what a practical book might contain. In “newly corrected” editions, readers came to recognize a distinction—perhaps more perceived than real—between the stability of a definitive printed text and the contingency of manuscript. Where medieval practical manuscripts reveal readers’ attempts to record a “corpus” of practical texts, many of which claimed to originate in ancient sources, printed books presented practical knowledge as ever-growing and constantly needing updating. But despite claims to novelty and originality, printers were actually quite conservative in what they printed. They turned, time and time again, to texts that had been circulating for centuries.

The growing emphasis on novelty and originality within printed practical books over the first half of the sixteenth century prepared readers to expect that man could uncover new knowledge about the world. But again, in early printed practical books as in manuscript miscellanies, there is no indication that this “new” knowledge would come from experimentation or hands-on experience. These printed practical books have the same redundancy, the same repetitiveness, the same vague instruction as do manuscript collections, no doubt because they share so many of the same source texts. Thus, while early printed practical books did bring useful medical, agricultural, culinary, and veterinary knowledge to a wider readership, and while they did condition readers to expect to uncover “new” practical knowledge, their message is not that new knowledge can be found through experience, but rather that new knowledge could be gained through the diligent pursuit of truer textual sources.

On 4 May 1556, the Company and Mystery of Stationers received royal incorporation from Queen Mary and on 1 February 1560, they were created a Liveried
Company of the City by the Lord Mayor of London.\textsuperscript{96} After three decades of intense competition, for the first time, English printers had a means to ensure their control of a practical text through registration and payment of a small fee. Once a text was registered, not only could the printer bring suit against anyone who published a rival edition of that text, they could also bring suit against anyone who printed a text similar to one they had registered.\textsuperscript{97} In 1557, the first year of the Stationer’s Register, John Kyng paid for the right to print “the boke of Carvynge” and “the boke of Cokery,” and in 1560, Kyng paid for licenses to print “the lyttle herbal” (Banckes’s herbal), “the greate herbal,” and “the medysine for horses.”\textsuperscript{98} These fifteenth-century practical texts were still popular enough at the mid-sixteenth-century to warrant their registration—registration that granted Kyng ownership rights over a body of knowledge that had been circulating freely, first in manuscript and later print, for well over a century. Publishers could no longer issue multiple competing editions of these old practical texts. Now, more than ever, a printer was obligated to demonstrate that his practical book was novel, or at the very least, had never been published before.


\textsuperscript{98} Arrer, \textit{A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London}, ff. 24, 61.
III. Women’s practical knowledge in the age of print

This chapter has thus far emphasized how medieval practical knowledge moved into print with ease, how it appealed to early modern readers in that new medium, and how that new medium shaped readers’ understanding of their world. I drew attention to collections of medical recipes, treatises on husbandry and agriculture, and books of cookery, hunting, and equine care that all derived from medieval sources but were repackaged and made equally popular in print. Yet despite what appears to be continuity, this is not to say that all the many categories of useful knowledge in manuscript were straightaway translated into print. For example, the *Treasure of pore men* is wholly filled with medical recipes drawn from medieval manuscripts, but notably absent from the book are the healing charms and natural magic so common to medieval collections.99 Likewise, the silk-braiding textile recipes from *The Tollemache Book of Secrets* or Harley miscellany were not included in printed manuals of household instruction either.

Regarding textile recipes, there is an easy enough explanation for their failure to appear in printed manuals: textile work was traditionally regarded as women’s work. Indeed, it had such a strong association with femininity in late medieval England that representations of Eve, that quintessential woman, frequently included a spindle and distaff.100 Printers might well have taken the entirely practical attitude that, owing to the


100 For example, Eve is depicted with spindle and distaff in the Biblical imagery of the Rawlinson calendar and in the marginal amateur illustration of John Crophill’s miscellany, both discussed in chapter 2, pp. 114–6. See Bodleian MS Rawlinson D.939, f. 4r, and BL Harley MS 1735, f. 2v.
relative paucity of female literacy in the early sixteenth century, recipes for textile production simply would not sell. In her comprehensive bibliography of English books for women readers, Suzanne Hull has identified only twenty-four titles from the entirety of the first century of print in England (1475–1575) that were intended for women readers, all of which were written by men.\textsuperscript{101} English printers likely chose texts for which they had an already established clientele of literate men, and books on hawking, hunting, medicine, and husbandry certainly fit that description.

In regards to charms, early printers had even stronger legal reasons for leaving them out of their printed recipe collections. Magic was officially illicit under church law even in the medieval era.\textsuperscript{102} In practice, however, such offenses were only leniently prosecuted in medieval church courts,\textsuperscript{103} perhaps because very little distinction was made between conventional herbal- or mineral-based pharmacopeia, perfectly acceptable prayers for healing, and “magical” cures that used words.\textsuperscript{104} In addition, though charms


\textsuperscript{103} Karen Jones and Michael Zell note that in the diocese of Canterbury between 1450 and 1543, only an average of two to three people per year were tried on charges of magic, a “negligible number compared with prosecutions for (entirely mundane) sexual offenses,” and that the punishments handed down were “relatively light forms of public penance.” They find similar numbers for the diocese of Winchester; see, “‘The Divels Speciell Instruments,’” 51.

\textsuperscript{104} One of the difficulties of defining “magic” as it appears in medieval miscellanies stems from this close relationship between prayer, traditional herbal medicine, and charms within medieval medical theory. This sort of “common magic” had very little to do with the astral or demonic magic practiced by the learned. The defining characteristic of “common” magical practice as it appears in medieval miscellanies is the use of powerful words outside of traditional rituals of prayer in an effort to call up supernatural
were technically illicit, manuscript production in England was never a centralized enterprise under an authoritative body like the Company of Stationers. Stationers and scribes rarely claimed their workmanship with marks or signatures in the manuscripts they copied. If charms were suspect in fifteenth-century England, that suspicion would have remained entirely with a manuscript’s owner—and only if the manuscript were ever submitted to scrutiny by a church authority, which would have been highly unlikely in the first place.

By the mid-sixteenth century in England, however, this relaxed attitude toward magic had given way to heightened fears about witchcraft and sorcery, the origins of which have been hotly debated by historians for decades now.\textsuperscript{105} Prosecutions for witchcraft rose steadily in the middle decades of the sixteenth century and reached their peak in England in the 1580s; new secular legal statutes made these crimes punishable by death.\textsuperscript{106} Though many of the victims of these prosecutions were charged with demonic power. Yet even that definition is undercut by medieval belief in God-given “qualities” that inhered in words, herbs, and stones. Thus, using words to call up the power of herbs or stones might rightly be viewed as entirely orthodox practice. On the interconnectedness of medicine, prayer, and magic, see Lea T. Olsan, “Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice,” \textit{Social History of Medicine} 16, no. 3 (December 1, 2003): 343–66. For a clear explication of the differences between “common magic” and “diabolical” or learned magic, see Catherine Rider, “Common Magic,” in \textit{The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West}, ed. S.J. Collins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 303–5, https://doi.org/10.1017/CHO9781139043021.015.


\textsuperscript{106} “The Bill Aye[n]st Conjurac[i]ons & Wichecraftes and Sorcery and Enchantments” passed in 1542 was the first English secular law to define witchcraft as a felony punishable by death; 33 Henry VIII c. 8, in \textit{Statutes of the Realm, Vol. 3: 1509–1545}
worship, casting curses, and other magical crimes far more serious than reciting a charm to cure a fever, these more mundane magical practices did come under scrutiny too. Couple increased anxiety over mundane magic with the conventions of the commercial market, wherein a printer’s name and device were frequently attached to printed books as indication of that printer’s particular authority, and it is easy enough to understand why a printer might not choose to print material that could bring him in front of the ecclesiastical courts. Even if a printer recognized a ready market for books of healing charms, the conventions of the print industry meant that he would have had difficulty exploiting it.

Yet the fact of the matter is that there likely was a ready market for charms in early sixteenth-century England. Those kinds of recipes had been circulating in vernacular manuscripts for decades, right up to the advent of the press. Nearly half of the manuscripts surveyed for this chapter contain healing charms or magic. It is hard to believe that readers’ interest in these categories of knowledge simply dried up in the decades following the introduction of the press. Indeed, readers’ continued interest in this material may account for why, despite people’s awareness of the growing stigma against magic, Wynkyn de Worde did publish one book—though not a typical “practical

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108 In the 1520s, two Kentish women were charged with using magic to heal the sick by administering herbs “with sixty Lord’s Prayers, the same number of Angelic Salutations and five Creeds” and “saying fifty paternosters and Ave, etc.” See Jones and Zell, “‘The Divels Speciall Instruments,’” 51–52.
109 Forty-four of 107 manuscripts surveyed for this chapter contain charms; see Appendix B for a list of which manuscripts.
book”—that did purport to impart charms and other popular magic to English readers:

_The gospelles of dystaues_, published in 1510.\(^{110}\)

De Worde’s edition of _The gospelles of dystaues_ was an English translation of an original French work, a satire of women’s knowledge and female community first published by Colard Mansion, the Burgundian scribe and experienced printer who partnered with William Caxton prior to his departure for Westminster.\(^{111}\) By the time De Worde printed his English translation in 1510, the French _Les evangiles des quenouilles_ had gone through several editions. De Worde’s was the first translation of the French text, but it would eventually be published in Dutch and German.

In all its printed editions, _The gospelles_ is written as the first-hand account of a scribe who is called in to record the knowledge of six “worthy doctoresses” who recount their special knowledge and give instruction over six evenings spent spinning thread. The male narrator/scribe explains that the Dames of _The gospelles_ invited him to record their words because “I had wryten of ladyes unto theyr laude & praysynge.”\(^{112}\) Therefore, they “charged me that I sholde brynge paper and ynke ynough with me and also pennes for they wolde determine hyghe and notable thynges.”\(^{113}\) The body of the book begins when

\(^{110}\) _The gospelles of dystaues_, STC 12091, EEBO (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1510).

\(^{111}\) _Le traittie intitule les evangiles des quenouilles faittes a l’onneur et exaucement des dames_, Livres Vernaculaires Français 19139 (Brugges: Colard Mansion, 1479). Mansion’s printed edition was based on a manuscript, BnF fr. 2151 (c. 1480), that was in circulation at the Burgundian court. It is one of only two textual records of the distaff gospels in script, and the other, Chantilly Musée Condé MS 654 (c. 1470), also originating in Burgundy, predates it by only ten years. See Madeleine Jeay and Kathleen Garay, _The Distaff Gospels: A First Modern English Edition of Les Évangiles Des Quenouilles_ (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2006), 19–20; Kathleen Loysen, _Conversation and Storytelling in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century French Nouvelles_ (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 20–1.

\(^{112}\) _The gospelles of dystaues_, sig. A.iii b.

\(^{113}\) _The gospelles of dystaues_, sig. A.iv.
the dames of *The gospelles* gather “with theyr dystaves and standardes with theyr spyndles and wherles and all that apperteyned to theyr arte” in order to share their special wisdom while they spin thread in the evenings.\footnote{The gospelles of dystaues, sig. A.v b.} The book uses the passing of time from Monday to Saturday as an organizational premise, as each evening forms a chapter, and each chapter is divided into numbered verses alluding to the literal gospels.

For the most part, the wisdom of the six “worthy doctoresses” who speak on subsequent evenings is comprised of advice about marital relations, pregnancy and childbirth, good and bad omens, and household practices and rituals that hold special power. On Monday evening, Dame Isengryne explains, among other things, how a woman may know the name of her future husband by hanging “before her dore the fy rst threde that she spynneth that daye and the fy rst man that passeth therby aske his name” and advises on how a pregnant woman should “knowe yf it be a sone or a doughter.”\footnote{The gospelles of dystaues, sig. A.vi b.} Dame Transelm, on Tuesday evening, pronounces that when a pot boils even after it is taken from the fire one may “knowe for a trouthe that in that same house is no wytches.”\footnote{The gospelles of dystaues, sig. B.iii b.} On Wednesday, Dame Abunde of the Oven (an early modern joke still resonant today) expounds on the protective powers of holy water.\footnote{The gospelles of dystaues, sig. C.iv.} Dame Sebylle offers advice on proper milking ritual on Thursday, and prognosticates that when “ye se the hennes gader under a pentous knowe that the weder shall chaunge and torne to rayne shortlye.”\footnote{The gospelles of dystaues, sig. C.vii b.} Dame Gambarde explains how to have fresh butter all year long on Friday. And finally, on Saturday, Dame Berthe, who is introduced as the daughter of a great
physician, instructs on proper remedies and cures for ailments, even though she knows that men “set but lytell by us, for they holde theyr parlayment […] in the reproche of oure sexe.” As the framework guiding the narrative, the women’s nightly textile work forms the source of all-female community.

To be sure, The gospelles has plenty of salacious and bawdy content that reflects its purpose as a satire of women’s knowledge, but many of the recipes and instructions printed in that volume also have a great deal in common with recipes from the manuscript recipe books discussed at the start of this chapter. For example, Dame Isengryne’s recipe to know the sex of an unborn fetus calls to mind a similar recipe in The Tollemache Book of Secrets. Dame Sebyll’s weather prognostications have antecedents in the dozens of weather prognostications found in manuscript miscellanies, discussed in the previous chapter. One of Dame Berthe’s cures, a charm to “hele fevers,” is nearly identical to a “sage leaf” charm found in at least fifteen practical miscellanies, discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Indeed, when one reads The gospelles alongside those manuscripts, it seems all the more likely that Wynkyn de Worde was capitalizing on a real appetite for natural magic among sixteenth-century readers when he had Les evangiles des quenouilles translated and printed in English.

But importantly, The gospelles of the dystaues could function as both satire and instruction, both repudiating women’s superstition and presenting it to readers, because of the role played by the scribe/narrator. Over the course of the six evenings, the scribe’s

121 See, for example, Wellcome MS 8004, ff. 70r–70v and BL MS Egerton 1995, ff. 60–62.
122 See my discussion of sage leaf charms in Chapter 4, pp. 216–9.
attitude toward the women transforms from one of respect to one of derision. At first the narrator purports to love women, saying that his aim in visiting the women each night is to record their knowledge so that it “sholde remayne fresshe.” By contrast, the “auncyent women” reject the sexual double standard, encourage sexuality out of wedlock, and endlessly complain about their no-good, lazy husbands.\textsuperscript{123} By the final page of the narrative, the scribe makes excuses for his earlier position, explaining that he was “moch wery of theym [the women] bycause that to my semynge all the wordes that they had spoken was without reason and with out any good sentence as I thought well it sholde be at the fyrste begynnynge.”\textsuperscript{124} His frank discussion of his change of heart and his anxiety about women’s knowledge is a powerful rhetorical strategy, signaling to the reader the appropriate attitude he or she should take toward this unorthodox knowledge.

Whereas claims to novelty and spurious authorship were often used to bring attention to the particular value of a printer’s edition—a marketing technique we saw play out in the previous section—in \textit{The gospelles}, the authorial voice actually served to distance the publisher from the content of the book. The narrator’s frank discussion of his growing anxiety over the course of the book signaled to the reader that the men responsible for bringing the text to the public were not culpable for its content. Though the male narrator is forced to relinquish a bit of his authority with an admission that he had been hoodwinked by the “worthy doctoresses” who invited him to their nightly meetings, the framing of \textit{The gospelles} allowed just enough wiggle room for De Worde to present what was probably still popular but certainly illicit knowledge to the public.

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{The gospelles of dystaues}, sigs. A.vi, A.vii b, A.viii b. \\
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{The gospelles of dystaues}, sig. E.v b.
After all, despite claims that the women were “without reason and with out any good sentence,” *The gospelles* still presents their wisdom in easily identifiable chapters with numbered entries for the reader to consult with ease.

Yet for all that the narrative framing of *The gospelles* may have originated as a clever workaround to the problem of circulating suspect knowledge, this rhetorical device would crop up again in later printed practical works, most especially in the “books of secrets” that began to proliferate on the English book market after 1558. In that year William Ward produced the first English translation of *The secretes of the reuerende Maister Alexis of Piemount*, an immensely popular collection of medical recipes originally published in Italy in 1555.\(^{125}\) Where the narrator of *The gospelles* recounted being called in to record women’s practical knowledge as it was dictated to him, the pseudonymous Maister Alexis framed his collection within a narrative of discovery. In the preface to the recipe collection, Maister Alexis describes how his “natural inclination” led him to take a solitary, twenty-seven-year journey across the world in search of practical knowledge.\(^{126}\)

The “discovery” narrative of *The secretes of the reuerende Maister Alexis* could be viewed as the culmination of the marketing techniques catalogued in the previous section. As we have already seen, printed recipe books from the 1520s onward often suggested through their titles that new knowledge might be uncovered. Books of secrets made this claim explicit, however, and offered to reveal new knowledge gained through a


single author-figure’s “diligence and curiosity.” Manuscript collections, of course, have no dedicatory epistle explaining how the compiler came to have access to a particular recipe collection. The very fact of a manuscript collection’s existence indicates that a compiler exerted some effort to locate and copy the texts contained therein, but nowhere was this process made explicit. Early printed practical books like Banckes’s *Vertues & propytees of herbes* and *Treasure of pore men* include no explanation of their sources or methods of collection either. Even single-authored practical books like Thomas Elyot’s *Castel of health* (first published in 1534) or Andrew Boorde’s *Dietary of health* (first published in 1547) contain no mention of how the author came to have the knowledge he did, or how he selected the recipes within the volume, despite the fact that both books include a dedication.

*The secretes of the reuerende Maister Alexis of Piemount* described the collection of practical knowledge, for the first time, as a deliberate act. In turn, it encouraged readers to do something similar, to look wherever they could for knowledge “not before known.” William Eamon first drew attention to this quality of “books of secrets” twenty-five years ago, suggesting that these books encouraged readers to go on a “hunt” for the “secrets of nature” via experimentation. When compared to the printed recipe books described above, “books of secrets” are notably different; they may indeed have encouraged readers to seek experiential knowledge in ways that the *Treasure of pore men* or practical manuscript miscellanies did not. But the concept of “secrecy” elaborated in

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these books was always relative. What might be “hidden” or “secret” to its literate male author might be entirely mundane knowledge to the people from whom it was collected. Books of secrets like that of Maister Alexis and others depended on a model of “secrecy” predicated on a distinction between published and unpublished knowledge, which in these texts was often indistinguishable from a distinction between the masculine and the feminine.

In the two prefaces to the English edition of *The secretes of the reuerende Maister Alexis*, the reader learns that Alexis has gathered secrets from, among others, “poore women artificers,” specifically for the purpose of making this knowledge accessible to literate, educated men: “this boke hath ben published and communicated to the worlde by the saied Alexis […] that men of all countreys might have the knowledge of that with ease, sitting at home in their studies, whiche he got with greate trauayle and laboure, wandering almoste al the worlde ouer.”\(^{130}\) This framing draws a sharp distinction between the virtues and accessibility of the published book as contrasted with the difficulty and secrecy of scattered, unpublished knowledge. In turn, it outlines a process of “discovery” which looks a great deal less like experimentation and more like editorial practice: collecting and organizing knowledge already in the world, held by those with no access to a press (“poore women artificers, peysantes, and all sortes”).

Thus, like *The gospelles of dystaues* before it, the preface of *The secretes of the reuerende Maister Alexis* lays particular claims to knowledge-making that both depended on, and obscured, the role of women. By placing literate men at the center of both *The gospelles of dystaues* and *The secretes of the reuerende Maister Alexis* as the only figures

\(^{130}\) Ruscelli, *The secrets of the reuerande Maister Alexis*, sig. +.iv b.
with the ability to lay bare the mysteries of women, to expose their hidden knowledge,
and to render their voices in text, both succeed in marginalizing women while
concurrently revealing “women’s knowledge” to a reading public both eager to learn and
wary of its danger. Both offer to bridge a perceived divide between a preliterate world of
oral knowledge characterized as feminine and secret, and an ordered, literate, and
masculine world of printed knowledge.131

In the later sixteenth century, when printers began to publish “books of secrets”
expressly intended for women, like The treasurie of commodious conceits, & hidden
secrets and may be called, the huswiiues closet (1573) or The widowes treasure plentifully
furnished with sundry precious and approoued secretes (1582), this dynamic continued to
structure the presentation of “women’s” knowledge.132 The treasurie of commodious
conceits contains a dedicatory epistle describing how the male author gathered “certayne
hidden Secretes together, & reduced them into one libel, or Pamphlet” for the literate
public unfamiliar with this valuable knowledge that previously had circulated via oral
networks. The “certain Gentlewoman” whose supposed influence gave rise to the
publication of the book goes unnamed.133 Though not explicitly a “book of secrets,” the
first book of textile recipes printed in England, a book of lace patterns created by the

131 See the discussion of this dynamic between orality and literacy in The gospelles of
dystaues in Gretchen V. Angelo, “Author and Authority in the Evangiles Des
132 John Partridge, The treasurie of commodious conceits, & hidden secrets and may be
called, the huswiiues closet, STC 19425.5, EEBO (London: Richarde Jones, 1573); John
Partridge, The Widowes treasure, plentifully furnished with secretes in phisicke: &
“feminine” books of secrets, see Kavey, Books of Secrets: Natural Philosophy in
133 Partridge, The treasurie of commodious conceits, sig. A.iii.
lace-maker for King Henry II of France, Federico de Vinciolo, continues along the same lines. Its English translation printed in 1591 advertises its novelty: *New and singular patternes & works of linnen. Serving for paternes to make all sortes of lace, edgings, and cut-workes. Newly inuented for the profite & contentment of Ladies, Gentilwomen, & others, that are desirous of this Arte.* Here again, the book’s dedicatory epistle describes how the author compiled its contents via interactions with exotic women (“divers Ladies and Gentlewomen of sundrie nations”).

Let us not forget, either, that the actions of these male printers and authors—taking credit for collating and organizing women’s knowledge in printed books—happened within the context of the very real material disenfranchisement of women over the course of the sixteenth century. The decline in early modern women’s status is somewhat beyond the scope of this chapter, but the fate of the London silkwomen, briefly touched on at the start of this chapter in relation to their silk-braiding recipes, should illustrate the point. Following the robust economic growth of the early fifteenth century outlined in Chapter 1, England experienced a series of recessions in the late fifteenth century which seem to have left women textile workers in a particularly precarious position. After 1504, the once-powerful silkwomen of London disappear entirely from

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the Parliamentary record. The Folger Shakespeare Library holds a single tantalizing record of a silkwoman, Anne Malory, who provided her silkwares to the Master of the Revels in February of 1558, but short of that there is little evidence to suggest that silkwomen were still thriving by the mid-sixteenth century.\footnote{Folger MS L.b.105, 1559.} Of course women still engaged in textile work for wages or for trade, but the economic independence these women textile workers had enjoyed in the fifteenth-century was long gone.\footnote{Eleanor Hubbard, \textit{City Women: Money, Sex, and the Social Order in Early Modern London} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 196–9.} By 1555, the all-male Weaver’s guild had wrested complete control of the silkweaving industry from the silkwomen and prohibited the apprenticeship of women.\footnote{Frances Consitt, \textit{The London Weaver’s Company} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 229–30.}

Yet despite these cultural, material, and economic constraints, women of the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries found ways to collect, compile, and circulate their own knowledge and expertise in manuscript recipe books.\footnote{Harold Love has detailed how the “stigma of print” led the elite in seventeenth-century England, and most especially women, to circulate letters, literature, and other works in manuscript rather than in print within communities of readers who shared their social status. Though his work focuses on the seventeenth century, Harold Love bases his definition of “scribal publication” on the premise that manuscripts circulated privately in opposition to the perceived public nature of print; see Harold Love, \textit{Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 35–90.} Indeed, though I was unable to find a single silk-braiding recipe in print, numerous seventeenth-century manuscripts contain silk-braiding directions very similar to those in \textit{The Tollemache Book} and Harley manual, many of which contain pieces of the braid work still tacked onto their pages.\footnote{Claire Canavan has located thirteen surviving stand-alone braiding manuals from the seventeenth century, in addition to two recipe books with instructions for braiding; see “Textual and Textile Literacies in Early Modern Braids,” \textit{Renaissance Studies} 30, no. 5 (June 2015): 684–85. Not included in her survey is a seventeenth-century braid manual now held in the Houghton Library at Harvard University as MS Typ 97.}
These collections, like the Receipts of pastery, confectionary, & c, penned by Catherine Tollemache, with whom I began this chapter, became mainstays in the houses of elite women across England. Women authors of these recipe collections often took special pride in their work, sometimes explicitly mentioning their recipe collections in their wills. These later-sixteenth- and seventeenth-century recipe collections have figured prominently in studies that reveal the important role women played as healers, makers, and knowledge-brokers within their households and communities, while also demonstrating female literary activity within the domestic sphere. Catherine Tollemache was one such early modern women. She acted as author, healer, maker, and knowledge-broker, but even so, it took over three hundred years for her collection of recipes to make its way into print.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter has traced changes to the circulation and presentation of practical knowledge that influenced how early modern English men and women understood their role as makers and consumers of knowledge. From script to print and back again, practical knowledge was durable and long-lasting. Recipes in manuscripts from late medieval England pop up again in printed manuals and in early modern recipe

143 For a partial list of scholarship on early modern English women’s recipe books, see note 6, above.
collections. Yet despite what looks like deep continuity, print did have a tremendous impact on the way people perceived even the most mundane knowledge, though not because moveable type in and of itself imparted new qualities to old texts. Changes in readers’ attitudes toward practical knowledge developed from the new relationship between printers and readers, as printers imagined how a group of abstract readers might react to new marketing strategies, and readers made their views known with their hard-earned coin. Thanks to this calculus, this consideration of what was suitable (and profitable) for public dissemination and what was not, some categories of practical knowledge did not make their way into print.

At first, collections of practical knowledge from Wynkyn de Worde’s press merely offered texts drawn from manuscript sources without comment, without much editorial interference, and without authorial attribution. But as printers sought new ways to distinguish themselves within an increasingly glutted market, they emphasized the novelty and comprehensiveness of their offerings, eventually tacking on authors’ names to texts that had previously circulated anonymously. Books of secrets took this development a step further, for the first time explicitly describing knowledge collection as an act undertaken by a single male expert figure. Printed practical books may have forced a change in the way English people thought about the origins of useful knowledge, but ironically, this change may also have encouraged readers to return to unpublished manuscript sources to “discover” secrets. Evidence of these early modern interactions with medieval miscellanies through reader marks, annotations, and amendments will be the focus of the next chapter.
By the mid-sixteenth century, print was the vehicle by which authoritative knowledge was brought to a wider public, but it was also the vehicle by which those with access to the printing press solidified their position as “experts” and in the process erased the contributions of the “unlearned.” The choices printers made about what to publish, not always ideological in scope, nevertheless had a profound impact on women’s ability to participate in the culture of discovery extolled in the pages of printed practical books. Even when women were credited as the sources of this knowledge in printed books of secrets, the authors and printers who brought practical knowledge to the public claimed a specific role for themselves as discoverers and voices of authority. Print may have facilitated the development of the idea that it was possible to discover more about the natural world, but it also made explicit exactly who would be doing the discovering.
By the time Thomas Buttus began the laborious process of copying his “booke of medycynnes for dyverse and soondrye deseazys” in 1564, he and the rest of his English compatriots were fully inundated with printed books, broadsides, and pamphlets.\(^1\) As John Foxe had remarked just a year earlier in the preface to the 1563 English edition of the *Acts and Monuments*, there was such a “superfluous plenty” of printed books in England that they “may rather seme to lacke readers.”\(^2\) This was especially true within the market for practical books and recipes. The late 1550s and 1560s saw reprints of older collections like the *Vertues & propyrites of herbes*,\(^3\) discussed in the previous chapter, as well as new printed editions of medical recipes like the *Gouernment of health* by William Bullein or the *The treasuri of helth*, translated by Humphrey Lloyd.\(^4\) New editions of “books of secrets” were also filling the shelves of English book shops. Parts two and three of the *Secretes of Maister Alexis* were for sale,\(^5\) in addition to *The boke of Secretes*

\(^1\) Buttus was a fastidious copyist who carefully dated his work. The heading above his Table of Contents ends “Anno domini 1564”; Bodleian MS Rawlinson C. 816, f. 2r.


\(^3\) *A little herball of the properties of herbes, newly amended & corrected*, STC 13175.19, Folger Shakespeare Library (London: John Kynge, 1561).


of Albertus Magnus. Of which is all to say that if Buttus had wished to purchase a printed collection of recipes, he certainly would have had his pick from any one of these editions.

Instead, Thomas Buttus chose to hand-copy a selection of recipes from “dyvers old Englyshe bookes” into a personal manuscript collection. Why did he choose to do so? For one, he may have had a family interest in medical knowledge: Thomas Buttus was the middle son of William Buttus (or Butts) who was physician at the court of Henry VIII and personal physician to Princess Mary before his death in 1545. Though Thomas did not rise to heights so great as his father, his recipe collection suggests that he at least valued the acquisition of medical skills. In 1564, he copied 146 medical recipes into his manuscript, entering the title of each one into a neatly arranged table of contents. Beside each recipe’s title, he carefully noted where to find the recipe: “for to make a clyster, looke þe xlj leefe,” and so on. Then again in the following year, Buttus appended still more recipes into his manuscript, which, he wrote, “came unto hande synce þe tyme þat þe other whyche arn before were wrytten, by meanes wherof, they coulde neyther be orderly placyd, ne noomberyd.” Though these newly added recipes did disrupt his painstakingly organized table of contents, Buttus decided that they were simply “too good too be left onwrytten.”

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6 Albertus Magnus, *The boke of Secretes of Albertus Magnus of the vertues of herbes, stones, and certayne beasts*, STC 258.5, EEBO (J. King, 1560).
8 Bodleian MS Rawlinson C.816, f. 8r.
9 Bodleian MS Rawlinson C.816, f. 10r.
10 Rawlinson C.816, f. 10r.
Buttus’s admiration for “olde Englyshe bookes”—by which he almost certainly meant medieval manuscripts—was not unusual in the mid-sixteenth century. In fact, nearly two-thirds of the fifteenth-century practical miscellanies surveyed for this dissertation, sixty-one of 107, contain reader marks from sixteenth- or seventeenth-century users. These range from the very common addition of recipes by early modern hands, to the addition of indices or tables of contents, and even occasionally to personal note-taking and record keeping. In all cases, early modern reader marks in medieval manuscripts indicate that these books were read and reread well into the era of print. Clearly the advent of print did not undermine the value of knowledge in manuscript.\(^{11}\)

If anything, it appears that by the mid-sixteenth century the dominance of print contributed to a reevaluation of the virtues of manuscript and the superiority of pre-print knowledge. In the previous chapter I speculated that some of this continued interest in medieval practical miscellanies may have stemmed from the influx of printed “books of secrets” into England after 1558. These books emphasized the value of hidden knowledge, which was often described as “secret” simply because it had “heatherto not bine published.”\(^{12}\) Readers were regaled with epistolary prologues which emphasized the value of manuscript over print as part of the increasingly common “modesty trope” employed by authors of printed works. As one of numerous examples, John Partridge, author of the *Treasurie of commodious conceits, & hidden secrets*, published in 1573,

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\(^{11}\) For a table of those manuscripts featuring reader marks, see Appendix B. For transcriptions of dateable or attributable reader marks in those manuscripts, see Appendix C. See also, Margaret Connolly, “Evidence for the Continued Use of Medieval Medical Prescriptions in the Sixteenth Century: A Fifteenth-Century Remedy Book and Its Later Owner,” *Medical History* 60, no. 2 (April 2016): 133–54.

emphasized that his “secrets” were first collected and circulated in manuscript solely for
the author’s “own behoofe, & my familiar frends.”\(^\text{13}\) It may be that Thomas Buttus took
such pains to organize and copy his own recipe collection out of a similar desire to
provide something of use for his “own behoofe” or that of his friends and acquaintances.
Or it may simply be that Buttus believed the recipes he got out of “dyvers old Englyshe
bookes” were somehow superior to those in printed books—even though, as the previous
chapter made clear, printed recipes were often simply repackaged versions of those in
medieval manuscripts.

In certain important ways, Buttus’s hand-copied collection points to the longevity
of traditions of circulating useful knowledge in manuscript. Yet Buttus’s manuscript also
reveals the impact of the press. For example, the format and organizational apparatus of
his manuscript borrows much from the printed book. His table of contents is far better
organized than any of the fifteenth-century practical miscellanies analyzed in this
dissertation, and his deliberate addition of recipes that “came unto hande synce þe tyme
hat þe other whyche arn before were wrytten” in a separate, numbered table of contents
illustrates his desire to achieve the kind of all-encompassing, comprehensive organization
of knowledge as advertised in printed books. Even Buttus’s careful attention to dating the
additions to his manuscript is reminiscent of a printer’s colophon.\(^\text{14}\) These residues of
print within an amateur manuscript compilation remind us that while Buttus may have

\(^{13}\) For a typical example of such a preface, see John Partridge, *The treasurie of
commodious conceits, & hidden secrets and may be called, the Huswiues closet, of
healthfull prouision*, STC 19425.5, EEBO (London: Richarde Jones, 1573), sig. A.iii.
\(^{14}\) For other examples of scribes deliberately copying the format of printed books in
manuscript, see Ann M. Blair, “Reflections on Technological Continuities: Manuscripts
Copied from Printed Books,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 91, no. 1 (Spring
2015): 7–33. On
preferred the collection of useful knowledge in manuscript, his manuscript is nevertheless an artifact of print culture. Buttus’s scribal practice is distinctly early modern.

In fact, Buttus’s preparation of his manuscript remedy collection is in-keeping with what historians now know about the wealth of scribal production and transmission in England in the years after the coming of the press. It is now apparent that the same societal changes that made print such a successful endeavor in sixteenth-century England contributed to a general increase in the circulation of texts, both printed and handwritten, throughout the early modern era. Scholars recognize that early modern England was awash in manuscript materials. These included deeds or conveyances created in the process of buying, selling, or leasing property; newsletters filled with international intrigue and domestic relations; “separates” full of Parliamentary speeches and other political material; ballads and libels poking fun at various figures in English society; and sonnets, verses, and plays, circulated within elite coteries of friends and acquaintances.

Though obviously early modern manuscripts addressed myriad topics and fulfilled a variety of roles in later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, historians of politics and political culture have been particularly attuned to these sources. For good reason too: in libels, parliamentary tracts, and newsletters historians find for the first time

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evidence of political opinions developing among those below the ruling elite.\textsuperscript{17} Thus, these manuscripts have been held up as illustrative of new ways of thinking, reading, or even “seeing” that developed post-Reformation amid the confessionalized politics that took shape after the Elizabethan religious settlement.\textsuperscript{18} Influenced by the Habermasian notion of a “bourgeois public sphere,” English historians have identified a precocious political awareness among the English who began to respond to the public “politicking” of vying political and religious factions through networks of manuscript circulation.\textsuperscript{19} According to these narratives, sometime around the mid-sixteenth century, the “reading

\textsuperscript{17} Notable studies of the circulation of manuscripts as a critical node within seventeenth-century English politics are Bellany, \textit{The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England}; Alastair James Bellany and Thomas Cogswell, \textit{The Murder of King James I} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Millstone, \textit{Manuscript Circulation and the Invention of Politics in Early Stuart England}.


public” I described in the first chapter of this dissertation transformed into a body of citizen-subjects whose scribal practices birthed a participatory “public sphere.”

In this chapter, I do not intend to dispute the critical importance of early modern manuscript circulation or offer a different chronology for the origins of the “public sphere” in England. Instead, echoing the argument I sustained throughout Chapter 1, this chapter will interrogate a critical but unacknowledged assumption within those narratives. Each of those studies presupposes that by 1580 or so there were a substantial number of Englishmen ready and able to wield a pen, both to interact with one another and engage with authorities through the written word. Indeed, it is only through these written interactions that people were able to “create something public out of a series of what otherwise might appear to have been largely discrete, ‘private’ acts of communication or interaction.” The evidence of this literate public is abundant by the last decades of Elizabeth’s reign, but where did it come from? How did Elizabethans develop a familiarity with the written word such that they were at ease in the world of letters? For a true “public sphere” to have existed, it must have extended beyond the reaches of courtly circles and outside the ranks of the most educated, but we know very little about the developing scribal practices of non-elite men and women in sixteenth-century England. Was this culture simply an effect of “post-Reformation politics” or do its roots go deeper?

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20 Peter Lake has been the most outspoken proponent of this “post-Reformation” political public sphere; see Lake, “Publics and Participation”; Peter Lake, “Post-Reformation Politics, or On Not Looking for the Long-Term Causes of the English Civil War,” in The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution, ed. Michael J. Braddick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 21–42.

This chapter will begin to address those questions through attention to the reader marks left in practical manuscripts. These manuscripts might seem an unusual source base from which to build an exploration of the nascent scribal practices that undergirded the political culture of later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, but I would argue that medieval practical manuscripts offer a unique perspective on early modern scribal culture not accessible through other sources. It is true that users of practical manuscripts rarely recorded their political beliefs or confessional identities within recipe collections, yet these books were the nodes through which many in England interacted with the written word for at least a century or more. Because these manuscripts were often used and reused over the course of several generations, and because they frequently invited reader additions and amendments, they form an exceptionally comprehensive repository of everyday writing practice among the English throughout the transformative years of the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In contrast to studies of early modern manuscript production or studies of reader marks in printed books, this chapter will trace the steady and significant increase in writerly habits among a growing number of the English population by examining a single set of sources that inspired reader interactions from 1400 to 1600. Through examination of reader marks, I argue that practical books served as ideal locations for developing epistolary, documentary, and literary practices among fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English men and women. Though anecdotal, the progression of reader marks in practical manuscripts offers more concrete evidence for the thesis that literacy rates were on the rise in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England, both within the urban environs of London and within the networks of friends and family that made up villages across the
English countryside. Finally, by presenting a long view of reader marks from the fifteenth to later sixteenth centuries, this chapter links the scribal practices of the pre-print world to those post-print, offering a genealogy for the “public sphere” of later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England that begins with marginal recipes, notes, and signatures in medieval practical books.

A historical analysis of reader marks in practical manuscripts is only possible, however, because of distinct changes in how people wrote—quite literally, how they formed their letters—from 1400 to 1600. The result is that early fifteenth-century English scripts are distinguishable from late fifteenth-century scripts, and a mid-sixteenth-century hand is even easier to distinguish from one of the previous century. These scripts fall into roughly three categories. A very few early fifteenth-century practical manuscripts are copied in a Gothic book hand, a script that uses boxy, disconnected letter forms. Other early to mid-fifteenth-century practical manuscripts are copied in a cursive script known as Anglicana featuring distinctively rounded letterforms and loops. The vast majority of practical manuscripts, however, are copied in a script that came to England at the end of the fourteenth century, another cursive hand known as Secretary, distinguishable by the

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22 This hand was often used for expensive religious works and was laborious to write, which explains why so few vernacular recipe books feature that script. Examples of practical manuscripts copied in a Gothic book hand are British Library MS Harley 2320, discussed in the previous chapter, and Wellcome Library MS 5262. Most vernacular practical manuscripts in a Gothic hand can be categorized as Textualis Semi-Quadrata or Textualis Rotunda. See Michelle P. Brown, A Guide to Western Historical Scripts from Antiquity to 1600 (London: The British Library, 1990), 86–8.

23 Because it was faster to write than the Gothic script traditionally used for books, by the fourteenth century it had been adopted for use in books as well as documents. Examples of practical manuscript copied in an Anglicana hand are British Library Royal MS 18 A.vi, ff. 35–55, and Glasgow MS Hunter 117. Most practical manuscripts that fall into this category are either written in Anglicana Formata or Bastard Anglicana. See Brown, A Guide to Western Historical Scripts from Antiquity to 1600, 98–102.
slant to some of its letterforms. Because it was even faster to write than Anglicana, by the mid-fifteenth century it had been widely adopted for the copying of vernacular texts, from literary works to medical recipes. Technically, the handwriting used by sixteenth and even seventeenth-century English people is also called Secretary hand, but the script underwent tremendous changes over the course of the sixteenth century. The mid- to late-sixteenth-century Secretary can be easily distinguished by the letterforms ‘h’ and ‘s,’ which look very different from those letterforms in fifteenth-century Secretary. Thus, though it is no exact science, through comparison of handwriting, it is possible to construct a timeline for reader marks and to trace a gradual increase in instances of mundane, informal acts of writing in practical books.

As medieval practical manuscripts passed from reader to reader over two centuries, they became vehicles through which English people tried their hand at all sorts of writing. The residues of this scribal practice, left behind on blank leaves and within the margins of practical books, suggest a range of experiences and beliefs regarding the power, utility, and authority of writing. These attitudes are demonstrated in the methodical organization of Thomas Buttus, in haphazard records-keeping and note-

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24 Most of the practical manuscripts studied in this dissertation were copied in either a fifteenth-century Secretary, or a Late Secretary. See Brown, A Guide to Western Historical Scripts from Antiquity to 1600, 106–7, 112–3.

25 My analysis of scribal “practice” is indebted to Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, which he defines as a “system of dispositions” wherein “categories of thinking, categories of understanding, patterns of perception, systems of value, and so on, are the product of the incorporation of social structures”; see Bourdieu and Chartier, The Sociologist and the Historian, 52–66, esp. 52. As part of the development of this concept of habitus, Bourdieu emphasizes a “theory of practice” as the means through which individuals internalize the social structures that comprise their habitus; see Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977).
taking, or even in recipes that call for magical writing as a component of a cure. Though many of these reader marks are brief notations, signatures, or even cancellations, even these seemingly insignificant bits of writing can in fact be seen as small-scale articulations of status, authority, and power which—increasingly over the course of the period under study here—could only be expressed in writing.

I. The power of writing

For much of the fifteenth century, English men and women relied on the services and professional skill of a trained scribe if they needed writing done. These men were trained to write quickly and beautifully on neatly ruled leaves of parchment or paper. For at least the first half of the fifteenth century, these professional scribes did the job of copying practical books. In addition to trained writers, book artists called “limners” were also occasionally called in to add ornamentation or illumination to vernacular manuscripts. For example, British Library MS Harley 2340, a copy of a treatise on hawking and hunting, is ornamented with blue initials and lots of red pen flourishes. Another early fifteenth-century practical manuscript, University of Glasgow Library MS Hunter 95, is especially elaborate. Its large parchment leaves are filled with practical treatises copied in a precise Anglicana script with multicolored and gilded initials at the start of each major text and blue and red filigreed initials throughout. And British Library Harley MS 2320, discussed in Chapter 2, contains three historiated initials, rubrications and filigree penwork, and is copied in a regular Gothic book script.26

26 See my discussion of BL Harley 2320 on pp. 154–6 above.
The existence of even a few of these elaborate practical manuscripts indicates that fifteenth-century readers were not opposed to spending time or money on the copying of vernacular instructional texts. Fifteenth-century manuscripts emerged from a long tradition in which books were often commissioned as ostentatious status objects. The adoption of English as a literary language in the fourteenth century did allow book culture to extend beyond a closed coterie of educated and elite patrons to a wider proportion of the English populace, but even still, some of the earliest English translations of practical texts were made at the behest of the wealthiest and noblest in England. For example, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, commissioned the continuation of the English almanac from 1386 to 1462, the English translation of Guy de Chauliac’s treatise on surgery was made for a fifteenth-century Duke of Bedford, and the translation of Palladius’s agricultural treatise, *De Re Rustica*, was made at the request of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester in 1442–43.27 Clearly, commissioning an ornate copy of a vernacular herbal or antidotary said something about a patron and his or her means. Thus, elaborate practical manuscripts illustrate that even run-of-the-mill instructional texts in plainspoken English were not necessarily seen as strictly utilitarian.

Indeed, though the vernacular was on the rise in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this increased reliance on written English in no way disrupted traditional habits of book-making. The adoption of the vernacular meant that more people were able to read recipes or treatises on hunting or agriculture than ever before; it did not mean that more English people were able to write these texts. At least for the first half of the

fifteenth century, even readers of lesser means who had no intention of paying for fine vellum, rubrication, or ornamentation still employed scribes to copy their manuscripts. Most fifteenth-century practical manuscripts show the hallmarks of a professional copyist—neat “pricking,” or ruling on the vellum or paper leaves, clearly marked margins, and a steady, even, and straight hand—but even with these markers of professional scribal work, most practical manuscripts are still quite plain. Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C.211, a tiny manuscript of only fourteen leaves from the first half of the fifteenth century, was clearly copied by a professional scribe, but its pages do not feature any rubrication or ornamentation. British Library MS Lansdowne 680, though larger than the Rawlinson miscellany, is equally unfussy. At some point the creator of the Lansdowne manuscript intended to include rubricated headings throughout the remedy collection, but from folio 34, conspicuous blank spaces appear above each recipe. Neither of these manuscripts was designed as a conspicuous status object, but both are still reflective of a medieval culture in which writing was a skill best left to the professionals.

It is for this reason that so few of the original commissioners of early fifteenth-century vernacular practical manuscripts can be identified through reader marks or annotations to their books. It appears that for much of the fifteenth century, certainly at least for the first half, these commissioners simply did not have the ability, or perhaps the inclination, to mark up their books. At the very least we can say that if these men and women were writing, they were not doing it in the pages of their practical manuscripts.

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28 I have characterized forty-eight of the 120 practical miscellanies surveyed for this dissertation as originating with a professional scribe, or exhibiting some traits of professional scribal work, such as neat and consistent letterforms, straight and even copying that does slide down the page, marginal ruling, or catchwords. All but one of these manuscripts showing professional scribal work date from the fifteenth century.
Despite the scarcity of earlier fifteenth-century reader marks, however, it is still possible to glean a bit about these users’ attitudes toward writing from the recipes they chose to include in their collections.

Indeed, many of the charms that medieval compilers chose to include in their recipe collections are particularly illuminating of readers’ attitudes toward writing. Charms took various forms, but the defining characteristic of most is that they employed some combination of powerful words, most of which were meant to invoke some element of Christian ritual to effect their cure. Twenty-three of the practical miscellanies analyzed for this dissertation contain some version of a charm that relied not simply on a person’s speaking powerful words, but rather on the physical creation of words through the act of writing and the application or ingestion of these words—a “textual cure.” For example, one textual cure instructs the healer to inscribe holy words on three communion wafers, or “obleys” and ingest the obleys over the course of three days to cure a fever. Another,

29 These twenty-three manuscripts are Bodleian MSS Ashmole 1378; Ashmole 1443; Ashmole 1477, part 2; and Wood. empt. 18, parts 1 and 2; BL MSS Arundel 272; Harley 2340; Lansdowne 680; Royal 18 A.vi, part 7; Sloane 140; Sloane 372; Sloane 382, part 3; Sloane 468; and Sloane 1314; CUL MSS Additional 9308; Dd.IV.44; Dd.V.76, part 1; and Ee.I.15, part 1; TCC MSS O.1.13, part 4 and O.9.39, part 1; Glasgow MS Hunter 117; and The Tollemache Book of Serets. Don Skemer notes that charm or the Latin carmen were the most popular medieval terms to describe writing used for protection or healing, though medieval writers occasionally used characteres or phylacteria; see Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages, Magic in History. (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 11–19.

30 The charm for writing words on an “obley,” or communion wafer, occurs in at least thirty-five late medieval manuscripts, and Latin versions of the charm can be found in British Library MSS Sloane 56, f. 79v and Harley 2558, f. 123v, the medical miscellanies of John of Arderne (1307–77) and Thomas Fayreford (c. 1420–1460). For more on Arderne and Fayreford, see Olsan, “Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice,” 358. For other occurrences of this charm in vernacular manuscripts, see George R. Keiser, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500, vol. 10: Works of Science and Education (New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1998), 3672, 3869–70.
a charm to heal a toothache, instructs the reader to “Take virgin wax, write therein the words + ay + loy + sadoloy + demicaloy + liberator deum. ley this under the hede and slepe theron.”

What each of these “textual cures” has in common is an insistence on the inherent power of the act of writing and a special reverence for the authority of the written word, but one in particular, found in Cambridge University Library MS Dd.4.44, makes this relationship absolutely explicit. The “textual cure” appears on folio 29r, written in a neat mid-fifteenth century cursive script. The charm appears under the heading, “a medicyn for þe axes,” (a corruption of the Anglo-Norman, ague, or acute fever), and it reads:

Take a sawge lef þat is not perced and wryte þis on with a penne with ynke In principio principio erat verbum angelus nunciat and þanne ȝif hyt þe seke to ete and let þe seke seye ‘first/ v. pater noster in þe wershippe of þe v. woundes of oure lord jesus χριστος cristie and v. aveys in þe wership of þe v. ioyes of oure lady and þanne in þe secunde day take a nopter lef and write þis on Et verbum erat apud deum Johannes Johannes predicat and seye þe prayers for seyde and þe þrydde day take a nopter lef and write þis on Et deus erat verbum Cristus tonat and ȝif hit þe seke and let hym seye þe prayers forseyde and by goddis grace he shal be hele.

Unlike other textual cures which employ vaguely Latin nonsense words, as in the charm for toothache above, this “medicyn” is unique for its incorporation of legitimate

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31 British Library MS Sloane 372, f. 25r.
32 CUL MS Dd.4.44, f. 29r. This particular occurrence of the sage leaf charm is not included in Keiser, but he does cite another twelve occurrences of the charm. Lea Olsan cites another three exemplars besides those listed in Keiser. I consulted the manuscript originals for five sage leaf charms cited by Olsan (CUL MS Additional 9308, f. 85r–v; Wellcome MS 542, f. 17v; BL MSS Harley 1600, f. 34v, and Sloane MS 468, f. 70v–71r; and Bodleian MS Ashmole 1477, f. 26r), and another three cited by Keiser (CUL MS Ee.1.15, f. 16v; BL MSS Arundel 272, f. 25v, and Sloane 382, f. 222v), as well as two additional witnesses not cited by either (Bodleian MSS Ashmole 1447, f. 15r, and Ashmole 750, f. 184r). See Keiser, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500, 3672, 3869; and Olsan, “The Corpus of Charms in the Middle English Leechcraft Remedy Books,” 226, 230–31.
Latin scripture. It directs the reader to copy verses from the first chapter of the Book of John, verses which declare words to be inherently divine: “In the beginning, there was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God.” These verses were the first of the four Gospels included in the Latin Horae, they were spoken aloud at the ritual blessing of the holy bread and as the Last Gospel of the Mass, and they were recited as part of the processions at Rogationtide as a means of protecting the parish from evil. In short, a fifteenth-century man or woman would have heard this verse spoken aloud hundreds of times in his or her life, and would have connected these words with ritual, sanctification of consumable matter, and protection.

To a fifteenth-century reader, these words would have invoked the power of the divine in specific ways that make this a fitting verse for an edible textual cure. But the power of this particular sage leaf “medicyn” is derived both from what the words in the charm signify (the power of God’s word) as well as the movements, processes, and techniques required to prepare it. The recipe does not call for the user to simply recite the verse, but rather to write the verse in a specific way, and this act of writing is one of the techniques required to transform natural ingredients into something altogether different and powerful. Craft and medical recipes in practical miscellanies instruct readers on how to turn specific ingredients into beautiful, curative, or useful things through grinding, boiling, mixing, soaking, and other transformative processes. This “textual cure” is no different; it gives specific instructions for which herbal ingredients to use (“a sawge lef dat is not perced”), how long to prepare the cure (“þe þrydde day”), and what to do with

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the herbal preparation when it was completed (“ȝ if hyt þe seke to ete”). Writing is the transformative process that gives rise to a new, useful substance.

Indeed, charms and textual cures are often found sprinkled throughout recipe collections, interspersed among more straightforward medical and craft recipes, indicating that medieval readers did not view a recipe for a textual cure differently than one for an ointment or salve. In this instance, the recipe immediately following the sage leaf cure in MS Dd.4.44 instructs on how to cure hemorrhoids with leeks, and below that another recipe involves the mixing of painter’s oil, mastic, red lead, yellow ocher, and frankincense. On the verso of the folio with the sage-leaf cure is a recipe directing the reader to grind various pigments to make dyes for shades of damask cloth, some of which are accompanied by specific instruction for applying these colors.\textsuperscript{34} When we read the sage leaf cure in the context of all of these other recipes for which process and ingredients are of primary importance, it becomes easier to see writing as akin to other craft techniques like grinding, tempering, boiling, or soaking—a process of transformation without which the final product would be impossible.

Not only does this way of thinking about writing help us to understand the perceived power and authority of writing in this textual cure, it also makes sense given early fifteenth-century readers’ dependence on professional scribes. Most likely, any mid-fifteenth-century reader of MS Dd.4.44 would have understood the laborious act of writing to be as much a part of the power of words as their meaning. Forming letters and joining them together, not to mention making ink, procuring parchment, or trimming a quill pen, involved a set of difficult processes. A set of scrawled reader marks on the final

\textsuperscript{34} CUL MS Dd.4.44, ff. 29.
leaf of the manuscript containing the sage leaf cure illustrates just how difficult these processes were. On this once-blank leaf (fig. 4.1), a fifteenth-century reader has attempted to copy out a recipe “for the dropsy,” but the letterforms are jagged and boxy, signs that his or her pen was not moving fluidly across the parchment leaf. Similarly, in Cambridge University Library MS Additional 9308, another practical miscellany from the early fifteenth-century, a reader has scribbled across several blank but lined leaves at the opening of the manuscript in a vague imitation of writing. The final leaf of that manuscript contains labored attempts at letterforms (fig. 4.2) that reveal the writer’s determined efforts to leave his or her mark, but still do not amount to legible words. In both of these manuscripts, we see evidence of readers attempting what was a difficult set of skills in medieval England. It was hard to learn the craft of writing; it required precision and practice and a great deal of effort. In light of all that, why shouldn’t such a difficult set of practices transform a sage leaf into something powerfully curative?

35 CUL MS Dd.4.44, f. 40v.
36 CUL MS Additional 9308, ff. 4v–6v, 97v.
Figure 4.1: Reader marks, Cambridge University Library MS Dd.4.44, f. 40v.
II. The written word in a changing society

The anonymous scrawls depicted in these two manuscripts are intriguing evidence that informally-trained and probably only marginally-educated men and perhaps some women in later medieval England were trying their hands at forming letters and words in unfamiliar scripts. The work was hard, and it took practice. Even so, the scattered and somewhat haphazard evidence of amateur writing found in practical manuscripts suggests
that greater numbers of English people were undertaking this work from the mid-fifteenth century onwards. For one thing, literacy rates were on the rise and more schools were opened in the cities, towns, and even rural parishes of England. Second, the collapse of the rigidly hierarchical economic system of villeinage, or serfdom, meant that there were technically fewer societal restrictions to receiving this education.

For the lower-to-middling classes of England, particularly those yeomen, merchants, and artisans who lived in urban areas, the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries brought numerous opportunities for education in the English language. Primary schools, or “reading schools,” attached to parish churches, chantries, hospitals, almshouses, or in some cases, guildhalls, taught reading and writing in English. According to figures collected by Nicholas Orme, a basic education in reading only cost around four pence per quarter in the fifteenth century, or about a day’s wages for a laborer working in Oxford or Cambridge where schoolhouses were prevalent. Though there are few records from these schools before the sixteenth century to indicate how many from the lower strata of English society were taking advantage of these new opportunities for education, there is evidence of growing social anxiety that vernacular education would precipitate a collapse of the established social hierarchy. In 1406, parliament passed new statutes prohibiting apprenticeship for the sons of non-landholding men and in 1409 England passed its first censorship laws, Archbishop Arundel’s

38 For estimated rates for schooling in the fifteenth century, see Orme, 132. For the average wages paid to day laborers in Oxford or Cambridge in 1450, see van Zanden, “Wages and the Cost of Living in Southern England (London), 1450–1700.”
39 On the conditions of the Parliamentary act passed in 1406 regulating apprenticeship, see Orme, 221.
Constitutions, intended to curb the circulation of vernacular Lollard theology. At the popular level, contemporaries lamented, “Now may each cobbler his son set to school / And each beggar’s brat on the book learn / And rank as a writer and with a lord to dwell.”

Though some of this social anxiety must have emerged from opening access to education, there were larger economic shifts underway in fifteenth-century England. Scholars agree that between the 1390s and the 1450s the legal institution of serfdom almost completely disappeared from England, though the precise dates of decline do vary somewhat from region to region. In the system of villeinage that was prevalent in thirteenth-century England, peasants were tied to parcels of land through “tenures,” a legal condition that granted them land to work and to pass on to their heirs in exchange for a payment of fees and services to the lord who owned the land. Though peasants had rights to live on and work the land in this system, they had no rights to sell or transfer of the land. By the second half of the fifteenth century as this landholding system collapsed, formerly bonded peasants began to access new legal forms of landholding that did allow for transfer or sale. The most prominent of these was the copyhold, which takes its name from the literal “copy” of the manorial court roll that would be given to the tenant as document of the conditions and terms of a tenant’s rights to his land.

By the mid-fifteenth century, access to this written document (the “copy” in “copyhold”) “became the basis upon which tenants were able to grant, sell and assign

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40 W. W. Skeat, ed., Piers the Ploughmans Crede, EETS, o.s. 30 (London: Early English Text Society, 1867), 28, lines 744–9, as cited in, Orme, Medieval Schools, 221.
42 Bailey, 21.
their land to third parties securely and safely through the manorial court.” These written documents granted the agricultural workforce some degree of freedom of mobility, freedom to pursue other kinds of work, and, perhaps, even freedom to pursue an education. It also paved the way for peasants to begin to acquire land through transactions with their neighbors, all of which, again, depended on written documents. As these new legal documents for the transfer and sale of land proliferated, the authorities again feared that newly literate members of the lower sort might precipitate collapse of the social and economic order. In a Parliamentary statute against the “Forging of False Deeds” from 1413, Henry V raised the specter of illegitimate and newly educated “divers evil disposed Persons” who “by false Conspiracy and Covin, subtly imagine and forge […] false Deeds and Muniments, and them do openly to be pronounced, published, and read, to trouble and change the Lands of good People.”

The reactions of the English crown and Parliament to the specter of a social inversion should demonstrate how completely contemporaries recognized the degree to which power within English society was accorded through access to writing. That a group of newly literate, newly enfranchised men and women throughout England awoke to this reality may furnish some explanation for why, from 1450 onward, reader marks are so much more prevalent in practical manuscripts. Individually it is impossible to attribute a reader mark to a specific cultural change—access to education or new economic freedom—but when observed as a body of reader interactions, it becomes easier to

conclude a trickling down effect was underway throughout the fifteenth century. Whereas early fifteenth-century practical manuscripts bear all the hallmarks of professional composition, which in turn suggest relatively well-off patrons, later fifteenth-century practical manuscripts begin to illustrate some qualities of amateur production. And, while it is difficult to pinpoint the social status of many of the users who left marks in their practical books, a general overview of these marks suggests that in addition to signatures and additions from members of the clergy (whose literacy might have been expected by 1475) many marks come from laymen, some of them from well outside England’s urban environs.

Even among the clergy, reader marks from the later fifteenth century often come from seculars, like parish priests or rectors, rather than the monks, bishops, or abbots whose manicules, marginalia, and glosses were common to medieval manuscripts since the earliest monastic scriptoria. For example, Peter Cantele, rector of the church of Saint Margaret at Monks Toft in Norwich, used the opening leaf of his practical manuscript to make a brief record that he had heard confession and administered communion at two of his parishes on April 1, 1463.46 Another clergyman, the chaplain Humphrey Harrison, copied the first line of what appears to be his last will and testament on the back of the final leaf of a thick manuscript filled with practical texts, including the treatise on hawking and hunting, directions for planting and grafting, and instructions for preparing colors and dyes, which immediately precede his reader mark.47 When later fifteenth-century reader marks do come from the regulars at priories and abbeys, as they do in the

46 British Library MS Sloane 1764, ff. 3r, 4r, 47–112.
pictorial almanac discussed in Chapter 2, British Library Royal MS 17 A.xvi, they often come from novices and students using informal writing to practice their signatures. In that particular manuscript, ten different names are written on the last six leaves of the manuscript—hardly the formal marginal glosses of the contemplative monk.

Because monastic houses were centers for education, those who were not clergy themselves but who were affiliated with religious institutions were often in a better position to learn to write. They, too, left their marks in practical manuscripts. We have already encountered Harry the Haywarde and John Crophill, both men whose professional capacity in relation to religious houses facilitated their literacy. Just as Crophill must have kept records as bailiff for Wix Priory in Essex, so he also kept his own personal record of expenses in his practical notebook, the third manuscript bound into British Library Harley MS 1735. He records several of his expenses for the year 1457, including “nayels for þe garden gate” at one pence and a saw and a hammer at three pence each. He also notes the patients he treated and babies born and baptized within his community, in addition to charms, a dietary, and various recipes. Other owners of practical manuscripts left similar records and notes but their professional status and affiliations are not so easily determined. John Nothryn, a man living near York sometime during the reign of Henry VI (1422–61, 1470–71), kept a list of debts owed to

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48 The marks on the final leaves of this manuscript may have come from boys being educated at the Benedictine Luffield Priory in Northamptonshire. Marks include: “And. Jarves” (f. 17), “Myles Lambregos” (f. 18), “Ales Thomson de Ely” (f. 21), “Joh. Sumter de Thesauro” (f. 24v), “Rob. Howell” (f. 24v), “Rob. Barfoot” (f. 25b), “Will Horble, alyter Cadderon” (f. 26), “Raff and Johan Jessen” (f. 31r), and “Joh. Bestoun” (f. 31r), all of which appear to date from the last quarter of the fifteenth-century.

49 Harry the Haywarde and Crophill are both discussed in Chapter 2, pp. 93, 114–6.

50 BL Harley MS 1735, ff. 36v–39r, 40–42r, 43–44r, 46v.
him at the back of his collection of medical recipes.\textsuperscript{51} Nothryn does not appear to have been a trained writer though he did have some Latin. His hand is unsteady and his scrawl is at times illegible. Even so, thanks to his rudimentary skill with a pen, he was able to use what was once a blank leaf at the close of his practical book to keep track of what he was owed.

Another fifteenth-century Yorkshireman, Nicholas Noosbett (perhaps Nesbett), also used his practical manuscript to record receipts of livestock and supplies from various members of his community.\textsuperscript{52} In Noosbett’s notes we learn that William Crawene purchased a “sowe & ij skynes” for four shillings and five pence; Thomas Smythe paid ten shillings and six pence for “a stote & other thyngs”; and Thomas Walese paid twelve shillings for “ij schepe.”\textsuperscript{53} Though it is possible that these were transactions involving Noosbett’s personal property, given the number of livestock that change hands, it seems more probable that these records were kept by Noosbett on behalf of a manor or estate. The proposition that Noosbett was a manorial officer whose literacy was a professional requirement is further supported by the composition of his practical miscellany. Unlike Nothryn, whose unsteady scrawl only appears at the back of a professionally-copied manuscript, Noosbett was a true amateur scribe who appears to have copied all the

\textsuperscript{51} “Iste liber consta[...] debita Johanne Nothryn.” CUL MS Dd.5.76, part 1, f. 27r. The manuscript can be roughly dated and located in York thanks to a list of the reigns of the Kings of England immediately preceding the list of debts owed on folio 26v. The Kings are listed up to Henry VI, whose name is written but no dates are given for his reign. At the bottom of the list of kings are a few notes on taxation, with figures for “Eboracorum.”
\textsuperscript{52} His small booklet of ten paper leaves is just one of several fifteenth-century manuscripts bound into the composite volume that is now Bodleian MS Ashmole 1438. Noosbett’s manuscript is folios 29 through 38 in this composite volume that runs to 172 leaves.
\textsuperscript{53} Bodleian MS Ashmole 1438, f. 38v.
recipes within his practical miscellany in his own hand. His signature appears at the top right of the manuscript’s opening page, just above a short instruction on how to tell if a wounded man is curable or not (the recommendation: give him something terrible to drink and see if he spits it up; if so, curable). In addition to this signature that ties Noosbett to the manuscript, there are other clues that point to an amateur production rather than a professional commission. His collection of medical recipes for ointments and “entretes” has no ornamentation or rubrication, and the handwriting on several pages slants precipitously down the page without ruling or marginal markers. Even so, it appears that Noosbett was a relatively practiced hand. Though he has not arranged his pages as a professional might have done, the script he uses throughout is a neat and easily legible Anglicana cursive.

It is clear from his small practical book that Noosbett was a literate man who was practiced at writing. The itemized list of livestock receipts at the close of the manuscript indicate perhaps that he used these skills in some capacity within a manorial estate. But another entry in Noosbett’s practical manuscript positions him within a wider community of literate individuals in northern England in the second half of the fifteenth century. At the bottom of folio 31r, underneath a recipe for “staunching blode” is a short entry that appears to be an excerpt from some kind of correspondence between Noosbett and an unnamed recipient: “And I pray yow to luke agayn I cum how þat þe buks may be getyn þat þis person had at Selby for the quarters whete þe person ye sade dwel alytl fro ye nonnys of appylton & be þe rude I schall dysprovye it to yow when I cum.”54 In this brief

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54 Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1438, part 3, f. 31r. The towns of Selby and the Cistercian priory of Nun Appleton are only about six miles distant from one another in south Yorkshire, placing Noosbett somewhere in that vicinity.
correspondence, we learn that Noosbett lived in southern Yorkshire, somewhere in the vicinity of the priory of Nun Appleton and the village of Selby. We also learn that he had at least one literate acquaintance from outside his community with whom he could correspond, and perhaps, settle disputes (“be þe rude I schall dysprovye it to yow when I cum”). Finally, we learn, perhaps, about the intended purchase of “buks” at a local market. Though it is little to go by, Noosbett has left a glimpse of what was clearly a burgeoning literate society within the environs of southern Yorkshire.

Noosbett was not the only late fifteenth-century reader to use blank spaces within a practical manuscript to copy out bits of correspondence. Another late fifteenth-century epistle is copied within Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1444 on a blank leaf just following a treatise on the “virtues of herbs.”\textsuperscript{55} Though we cannot know who wrote the letter, it is addressed to a “Thomas Jentte,” and it implores the recipient to intercede in a “bargyn as was mad between master vecar & me” because the writer hoped that “master vecar wold a dalt mor kyndlye wit me.”\textsuperscript{56} In this instance, the correspondence is written upside-down in relation to the rest of the manuscript, and intriguingly, the paper has been cut just below the final line of the letter, indicating, perhaps, that its author meant to send it off. Paper was not exorbitantly expensive by the later fifteenth century, but it still cost enough that a blank leaf in an older manuscript would have been a tempting and economical solution for a rural yeoman in need of arbitration via writing. Finally, the late fifteenth-century clergyman John Gysborn, canon of Coverham Abbey in Yorkshire, copied out eight different epistolary models into his personal notebook, each one offering

\textsuperscript{55} The letter, copied on to folio 30v of Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1444 can be dated to the later fifteenth century by its secretary script.
\textsuperscript{56} Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1444, f. 30v.
a set of phrases and formal greetings to be excerpted and used in personal letters, bills, and receipts.\textsuperscript{57} The presence of these form letters in a manuscript that far predates sixteenth- and seventeenth-century printed models for letter writing illustrates a growing awareness among fifteenth-century English people of the importance of written communication among friends, family, and acquaintances.\textsuperscript{58}

These written records and correspondence indicate that the ability to write was becoming less of a rarity across the English countryside by the later fifteenth century. Not only is this important for understanding how these men interacted within their communities, it also demonstrates an ability to interact with broader legal and economic structures in English society, most of which depended on written records. Indeed, a fascinating addition to another mid-fifteenth-century practical manuscript, now bound as the third of at least six originally separate codices in Cambridge University Library MS Ee.1.15, illustrates just how completely English systems of justice depended on widespread literacy among a host of local county officers, from attorneys, to sheriffs or bailiffs, to the filicer, or records keeper.\textsuperscript{59} This reader addition appears toward the end of

\textsuperscript{57} British Library Sloane MS 1584, ff. 29r–31v. Gysborn’s manuscript does not strictly meet the criteria I established for a “practical manuscript” as his collection contains a good deal of theological material in addition to medical recipes and directions for enameling and engraving, thus it is not listed in Appendix B or C.

\textsuperscript{58} The first printed epistolary manual in English is Angel Daye, \textit{The English Secretorie VVherin is contayned, a perfect method, for the inditing of all manner of epistles and familiar letters, together with their diversities, enlarged by examples vnder their seuerall tytles}, STC 6401 (London: Robert Waldgrave, 1586).

\textsuperscript{59} The first three leaves of the manuscript contain an incomplete list of herbal ingredients organized alphabetically, beginning with \textit{P}, which may have been its own separate work. Folios 3 through 5 contain a Latinate treatise on the characteristics of the months, copied on to much smaller leaves of paper than the remainder of the manuscript, suggesting that it was its own codex. The practical miscellany under study here (ff. 6–134) is written in a mid-fifteenth century hand to folio 100, but the remainder of the folios (ff. 100–134) are filled with additions in later fifteenth- and sixteenth-century hands. There are several
the manuscript, following a number of treatises and recipes that fit within the broad amalgamation of useful information commonly found in practical manuscripts.\textsuperscript{60} The addition appears to have been copied into the manuscript sometime in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, and can be roughly dated by a marginal note that references a Parliamentary statute from 1483. It is entitled “The taking out of wrytte,” and describes the procedure for acting as “attorney for any man” for prosecution of debt or “trespass” in the court of Common Pleas or the King’s Bench:

\begin{quote}
Iff there be any man that which willing to be attornay for any man if he will of dett or trespas in the kings bynch or in the commyn place first he must have an oryginall writt of the chancerie paiing \textit{herefore} iij. d. and for the wrytt v. d. Afterward the same writt must be delivere\textit{d} to \textit{he} Shereff of the citie or of the shyre where that ye take your sewte and the said shereff or his deputie must breke the said writt and the philister of the same must make a Capias paiing \textit{herefore} iij. d. and for the seall vij. d. And he must deliv\textit{er} the said Capias to \textit{he} Sheref and he shall returne it in to the philister of the same shyre. Than he must goo to serche the same philiste bokes to find the same Capias and pr\textit{ay} the same philiste to make up an alias Capias paiing \textit{herefore} iij. d. and \textit{he} bere the same writt to \textit{he} clerke of hell and he must seall it. And ye must pay for the sealing vij. d. and after that ye must have a plurias capias paiinge for the wriptying iij. d. and for the seall vij. d. Than ye must have a warrant of attorney payng \textit{herefore} iij. d. And after ward ye must take out an Exigent out of the Exigent bokes of the same Shyre paiing \textit{herefore} v d.\textsuperscript{61}
\end{quote}

Following this excerpt, the instructions continue for another two and a half leaves in an itemized list of all the various documents that one might have cause to utilize in the different hands represented in these additions, ranging from the later fifteenth century (ff. 104v, 116v) to the mid-sixteenth century (f. 100).

\textsuperscript{60} For example, the manuscript contains various medical recipes and charms throughout (esp. ff. 6–24r), the English translation of Macer’s herbal (ff. 24v–65r), a lunar prognostication and a different prognostication from the day of Christmas (f. 12r and 73r), a treatise on phlebotomy (ff. 73v–74r), a urinary (ff. 75r–77v), culinary recipes and recipes for wine-making (ff. 10v, 78r–79v, 105r, 110r), and recipes for black ink and verdigris (ff. 95r–v, 100r).

\textsuperscript{61} CUL MS Ee.1.15, f. 126r. The passage is copied in a later fifteenth-century secretary hand.
course of transacting a plea, along with the corresponding fee charged for the copying of that writ; for example, “Item þere is a super sedeas upon a Capias þe fees þereof is ij. s. v. d.” 62

It is important to note that all of the writs listed in this entry have to do with gaining access to royal justice, not merely adjudicating local disputes, as in the letters excerpted in the preceding paragraph. The passage begins by noting that one needs an original writ of the Chancery, or the office of royal scribes. Nor does this passage reveal some new reliance on documentation within the English judiciary. Though the fifteenth century saw a steady increase in the number of documents produced in various official capacities, the courts of the Common Pleas and King’s Bench originate in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and even in their earliest proceedings relied on writs from the Chancery. 63 But while written legal proceedings were certainly not novel to late fifteenth-century attorneys, the passage here does demonstrate the degree to which a culture of official writing touched all levels of English government, from the royal scribes of the Chancery to the local records keeper, or “philister” (filicer). Moreover, the fact that this passage was copied into a practical manuscript, and in English no less, illustrates the extent to which later fifteenth-century people beyond the educated elite recognized that knowledge of legal documents—where to obtain them, what they were, and how much they cost—was invaluable.

This addition is not a passage about legal precedents or theory, but rather an immensely practical set of instructions relating the logistics for obtaining the writing

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62 CUL MS Ee.1.15, f. 126v.
necessary for the execution of English justice. The passage outlines that these logistics begin with the Crown and the Royal Chancery, but thereafter, the bulk of the writing and record keeping described is done at the shire level. At every level, from royal Chancery clerk to local “philister,” considerable sums of money change hands in the creation of these official written instruments. The sum required for an “original writt of the chancerie” was eight pence, whereas at the local level, the “philister” appears to have charged on average about three pence for the copying of a writ. However, the use of an official seal to authenticate the document cost nearly twice as much, at seven pence. In addition to the several writs listed in the excerpt above, there are dozens more that fill the following two leaves, all of which would have been hand-copied by local professional scribes. Indeed, this list of legal writs reminds us that professional scribes were integral to the fabric of later medieval English society, even though literacy was expanding among men like Nothryn and Noosbett. Those men wrote letters and kept records, but if either of them had needed to transfer or sell property or make use of the English courts, they still would have needed a professional scribe to authenticate those documents through the use of official wording, or with the stamp of a seal. Their literacy did not free them from participating within a rigidly structured hierarchy of written texts.

Finally, besides simply illustrating the sheer number of occasions for official, authoritative writing in late medieval England, this list of legal writs is important for illustrating shifts in attitudes toward the authority and power of writing that took place within English culture over the course of the fifteenth century. Though both a textual cure

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64 On the history of seals as tools of authentication in England, see Clanchy, From Memory to Written Record, 308–17.
and directions for procuring a legal writ rest on assumptions about the power of writing when performed by a select few rather than the many, the two diverge in their understanding of where this power resides. In textual cures, writing was a transformative process wherein metaphysical power was inscribed into visible, tangible, or even edible words. By contrast, the person who copied the list of legal writs into CUL MS Ee.1.15 understood that writing was a means to access authority, but was not by itself a mystical act. A *filicer* could create a powerful written object (a writ) because he was granted with specific authority from an external source of power. If an unauthorized person, like Noosbett or Nothryn, for example, wrote the same words as the *filicer*, those words would have no power whatsoever. Indeed, such an act might make Noosbett or Nothryn liable for prosecution under the act against the “forging of false deeds.” Of course I do not mean to argue that this way of viewing the authority of writing was new to the fifteenth century. Rather, I mean to suggest that an understanding of writing as instrumental rather than mystical had gradually taken hold beyond the ranks of the elite and educated. Indeed, it had permeated the culture enough that a late fifteenth-century writer might record a list of necessary legal writs *in English* in the blank leaves of a practical book.

Indeed, the evidence of this transformation in attitudes is on vivid display in CUL MS Ee.1.15 itself. Like so many other fifteenth-century practical miscellanies, the manuscript originally included numerous textual cures and charms. Over time, while some readers made additions—like the list of legal writs or the various other added

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65 1 Henry V, c. 3, *Statutes of the Realm*.
66 The increase in reliance on written documentation and trust in its authority is, of course, the subject of Michael Clanchy’s magisterial *From Memory to Written Record*. 
recipes on its final folios—others chose instead to make cancellations. One of these later readers, perhaps Robert Steele, whose signature appears on folio 4r, has crossed through all of the charms and textual cures in CUL MS Ee.1.15. On folio 16r of the manuscript, a recipe entitled “For the fevere a sovereyne medcyne provyd” that begins “Take a sauge leffe and wryte thereon…” has been crossed out with a single large X. Below that, another textual cure “to staunch blode” involving the writing of a name on a man’s forehead has also been crossed out with three separate cross hatches. These cancellations have been done despite the fact that the original, mid-fifteenth-century scribe drew particular attention to their value, drawing two manicules in the left margins of both recipes with “nota” inscribed above them.

For the later reader who excised charms from CUL MS Ee.1.15, textual cures were suspect, a remnant of a culture that afforded mystical power to the writing of special words. He was not alone in this change of heart either. A later reader of one of the manuscripts bound in Bodleian MS Ashmole 1477 obscured numerous charms and textual cures in that practical manuscript with ink blotches, lines, and X-marks.67 Richard Nix, Bishop of Norwich from 1501 to 1535 and owner of another early fifteenth-century practical manuscript, almost totally erased the “plate of lead” charm, a textual cure, from University of Glasgow Library MS Hunter 117.68 Though he prominently left his ownership mark in two different leaves of the manuscript (“Ricardus Nix possidet hunc

67 These cancelled charms and textual cures can be found in Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1477, part II, ff. 7v-8r, 9r, 11v-12r, 12v, 15v, 18r-18v, 19r, 19v, 22r, 22v, 23r, 26r, 28r, 39v, and 44r.

68 The diagram depicting how to inscribe on the “plate of lead” charm on folio 36v has been completely erased, as have the Latin words necessary to perform the cure. See Connolly, “Evidence for the Continued Use of Medieval Medical Prescriptions in the Sixteenth Century,” 153.
librum medicine”), the man who zealously persecuted suspected Lollards and burned at
least six heretics at the stake could not abide a textual cure in his book of medicines.69

Nix may have been a zealot, but his attitude toward “textual cures” is reflective of
a growing unease with the practice of using words to heal in the sixteenth century.70 In
1480 John Stokys was accused in the ecclesiastical courts of London of using
“incantations” to cure fevers,71 and in the 1520s two Kentish women were prosecuted in
the diocese of Canterbury for using magic to heal the sick by administering herbs “with
sixty Lord’s Prayers, the same number of Angelic Salutations and five Creeds” and
“saying fifty paternosters and Ave, etc.”72 The myriad reasons for this change in attitude
have been documented by historians of witchcraft and magic, but it is useful here to recall
that the central premise of these cures was that man could harness the power of words to
generate powerful effects.73 Growing familiarity with writing—one could even say the
normalization of it—must have had some effect on a belief system predicated on mystical

69 I think it probable that Nix was behind the cancellations of charms and textual cures in
Glasgow MS Hunter 117, but it is possible that a later sixteenth-century Protestant reader
may have done the cancellations. On Nix’s persecutory tenure as Bishop of Norwich, see
Norman P. Tanner, “Nix [Nykke], Richard (c. 1447–1535),” in Oxford Dictionary of
National Biography, Online Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), https://doi-
70 For learned and theological perspectives on healing magic in medieval culture, see
Rider, “Medical Magic and the Church in Thirteenth-Century England.” On the
persistence of magical healing practices in sixteenth-century England, see Thomas,
71 “Johannes Stokys utitur incantacionibus sortilegiae pro febris”; William Hale Hale,
A Series of Precedents and Proceedings in Criminal Causes Extending from the Year
1475 to 1640: Extracted from Act-books of Ecclesiastical Courts in the Diocese of
London, Illustrative of the Discipline of the Church of England (Francis & John
Rivington, 1847), 3.
72 Jones and Zell, “'The Divels Speciall Instruments,'” 51–52.
73 On witchcraft in early modern England, see Thomas, Religion and the Decline of
Magic, 517–698; Macfarlane, Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England; Clark, “Inversion,
Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft.”
words. As more and more English people gained literacy, or, at the very least, had occasions to encounter literate people within their communities, writing itself lost some of its mystery.

And yet despite this evidence that early modern readers were uneasy with some portion of the contents of medieval practical manuscripts, reader marks indicate that they were still very much in use throughout the sixteenth-century. At the turn of the sixteenth-century, as printed books and pamphlets began to fill English book shops, writing by hand was still of critical importance. It may have lost a bit of its mystery as greater numbers of physicians, artisans, merchants, and yeoman farmers gained the skills to master the practice, but it lost none of its authority. If anything, the advent of the press brought a greater awareness among English people that writing was a means to better themselves, retain knowledge, and secure a place in society. And throughout this century that saw the growing dominance of print, English people continued to turn to practical manuscripts to hone their skills with the pen.

III. The early modern writer and the medieval book

Although there is considerable evidence (much of it already documented in this dissertation) that the printing press merely acted as an amplifier for practical texts already popular in late medieval England, historians have tended to credit the coming of the press in 1476 with giving rise to a demonstrably different, “literate” culture. Adam Fox has argued that the proliferation of printed materials—on alehouse walls, in market squares, and in people’s homes—made it so that few, if any, sixteenth-century English people
lived “without reference to the printed word.” Therefore, David Cressy surmised that this informal, everyday contact with the written word encouraged the spread of literacy far more than did English schools. Certainly the press made the written word more accessible and more prevalent, but I have documented throughout this dissertation how the robust manuscript culture of fifteenth-century England gave rise to the conditions in which the print industry found success. Amateur manuscript production was already on the rise in the later fifteenth century, and while it may very well be that print changed the way English people thought about the written word, it did not convince English people of the obsolescence of manuscripts either.

For the first decades of the sixteenth century, there is every reason to believe that English people valued print and manuscript in much the same way. We know that people continued to create manuscript collections of practical texts after the advent of the press. William Aderston’s medical recipe collection, discussed in Chapter 3, was probably created in the last decade of the fifteenth-century, just as practical texts were arriving on the print market. The medical recipes and instructional treatises copied in 1529 by the vicar John Reed of Nether Broughton and Melbourne in Leicestershire and the medical

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76 Aderston’s recipe collection is the first of two manuscripts bound in Bodleian MS Ashmole 1389, ff. 1–123v.
77 Reed copied a practical miscellany, now Bodleian MS Rawlinson A.393, for the wealthy Findern family, known for their literary patronage. Folio 89v features the reader mark: “Probatum est per me Georgen Findurne.” See Keiser, “Two Medieval Plague Treatises and Their Afterlife in Early Modern England,” 299; Keiser, “Practical Books for the Gentleman,” 483. On the more famous literary manuscript owned by the Findern family, CUL MS Ff.1.6, the “Findern anthology of lyrics and verse,” see Boffey and Edwards, “Towards a Taxonomy of Middle English Manuscript Assemblages,” 266–7.
and craft recipes copied around 1525 by the clergyman Thomas Jamys of Badsey in Worcestershire are nearly indistinguishable from earlier fifteenth-century manuscript collections. These and other sixteenth-century recipe collections, like George Walker’s, discussed in Chapter 2, illustrate that the production of new manuscripts continued apace in the sixteenth century, and that medieval practical knowledge remained relevant.

In addition to creating new manuscripts that carried medieval knowledge into the era of print, sixteenth-century readers also continued to read medieval manuscripts. Of the 107 medieval practical miscellanies surveyed for this dissertation, sixty-one feature reader marks and additions from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century readers. These readers may have approached medieval collections with an entirely different set of expectations than the original compilers who set pen to paper or parchment, of course. They may have been looking for “secrets” which they imagined to be unavailable to them in print, as I argued in Chapter 3, but their continued interest highlights the absurdity of locating a sharp break in English culture solely on the basis of material differences between manuscript and print.

Yet if the coming of the press did not precipitate a drastic reduction in manuscript production or force readers to abandon medieval collections, it did eventually establish a new set of standards for what a book should be and how one should interact with it. In other words, over the course of the sixteenth century, manuscripts begin to display some

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78 Jamys’s collection of recipes is BL MS Additional 21431. The catalogue entry for the manuscript attributes the collection to “Sir Thomas Jamys, vicar of Badsey, Worcester” and the Badsey Society lists Thomas Jamys as the first vicar of Badsey, appointed by the last abbot of Evesham in 1525; https://www.badseysociety.uk/early-period-vicars-badsey-and-wickhamford/badsey-1525-1557-thomas-james.

79 See Appendix B for a list of which medieval manuscripts contain early modern reader marks.
of the conventions of the printed text. At the opening of this chapter, I noted the very
careful organization and dated pseudo-colophon of Thomas Buttus’s sixteenth-century
recipe collection. Buttus was not the only sixteenth-century reader to import these
conventions from print into manuscript. British Library MSS Additional 21431 and
Sloane 393 both have tables of contents added by sixteenth-century readers.80

But the widespread adoption of the practice of dating one’s compositions—be they entire collections of recipes or simply a single marginal note—might be the most
notable change to scribal practice from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century.81 Besides
the precocious John Crophill who made a series of dated entries in his notebook from
1456 to 1480,82 only one other fifteenth-century practical manuscript contains a dated
reader mark, and it is the certificate of confession in BL MS Sloane 1764, discussed
above.83 By contrast, a dozen different sixteenth-century readers left dated marks in ten
different fifteenth-century practical manuscripts.84 For example, a man with the surname
“Smerthwaytt”—perhaps the John Smerthwaite who is listed as a freeman of the Barber-

80 BL Additional MS 21431, ff. 58–9; BL Sloane MS 393, ff. 1–12.
81 Appendix C lists all the reader marks in the practical manuscripts surveyed for this
dissertation which are either attributable to an individual or are datable to specific year.
In the column “Approximate date,” all entries dated with a single year as opposed to a
range of years reflect a dated reader mark or entry.
82 Crophill’s dated entries are found on BL Harley MS 1735, ff. 37v, 38r, 40v, 46v, 47r,
and 50r.
83 Peter Cantele dates his certificate of confession in BL Sloane MS 1764, f. 3r
84 See Appendix C for this list of reader marks with their dates. This figure does not
include the early modern compilers, like Buttus, who made new manuscript collections in
the early modern era with dated entries. Early modern practical manuscripts were not the
focus of my research so I cannot provide figures for how many of those are dated, but
anecdotally, I would assume the percentage is quite high.
Surgeons in 1537)—added a dated pseudo-colophon to the close of a short set of entries in Wellcome MS 406, including recipes “To make good gome,” “To make texte ynke,” “For staunching blode,” and “For canker of þe lypse.” On what were probably blank leaves just following those recipes, Smerthwaite added his mark: “Wrytyn & fynyshyd þe ere of owr lord M. CCCCC & xi þe rayin of king hary þe viijth þe iii yere // þe xvii day of januer.” Apparently, however, Smerthwaite was not “fynysheyd” because he returned to his notebook of recipes after 1511, eventually filling another fifteen folios with lists of herbal ingredients and more recipes in his rough but legible secretary hand.

British Library Sloane MS 357 has two different sixteenth-century reader marks with dates. The first is a list of receipts marked with a barely legible heading at the top that reads “Anno h viij xxiiij,” or the twenty-fourth year of the reign of King Henry VII, thus narrowing the timeline for the receipt of geese and pigs itemized in this reader addition to between August 24 and October 2, 1509. On the folio facing this early sixteenth-century list of receipts, a mid-sixteenth-century reader has added another date following a receipt for “conserve of rosemary flowers” and “syroppe of vyolette” with the postscript: “for my aunte skinner tew die novembris anno 1563 & anno vth E regine.” Prognostications were also ideal places for the addition of birthdates in a manuscript. One of the miscellanies studied in the previous chapter, British Library Harley MS 2320,

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86 Smerthwaite’s recipes appear as the second of two manuscripts now bound together as Wellcome Library MS 406. The first MS, ff. 1–22, is datable to the fifteenth century, while the remainder of the MS, ff. 23–44, is early sixteenth century, copied in Smerthwaite’s hand.
87 Wellcome MS 406, f. 24r.
88 BL Sloane MS 357, f. 61v.
contains the following marginal note alongside a set of nativities: “Born the 5. of September in the Morn. 1552. Richerd HaVell, Richerd Hooper, Maud Derrye.”

Likewise, on blank leaves between a collection of medical recipes and a glossary of herbs in Cambridge University Library MS Dd.10.44, William Thorowgood noted the birth of “An thorowgood my fyrst dahter […] born þe 6 day of august the year that pauls stipil was a fyar anno 1561 beying weddensday be twyn 9 or 10 of the clock at nyght in the our of venus & in the syn of cansar god mak hir his sarvant a men.”

And then there is Henry Dyngley (or Dyneley), who added his name and date to three separate fifteenth-century practical miscellanies, indicating, perhaps, his pursuits as a collector of medieval medical manuscripts over the middle decades of the sixteenth century. Dyngley’s family owned the manor of Charlton in the parish of Cropthorne, Worcestershire, but like many other families, they only acquired Charlton in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, a period of frequent land transactions following the precipitous decline in population after the Black Death. Throughout the fifteenth-century the Dyngleys passed Charlton from son to son until Henry Dyngley inherited it in 1541 at the age of twenty-six. By that point, Henry’s star was on the rise in Worcestershire. Over the next decades he consolidated his family’s holdings, even going so far as to bring suit against the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral at Worcester for

89 BL Harley MS 2320, f. 19v.
90 CUL MS Dd.10.44, f. 102v.
rights to common lands pertaining to his manor at Charlton.\textsuperscript{93} He was appointed Sheriff of Worcestershire in 1553 and again in 1568.

Throughout this period, as he was rising in stature at the county level, Henry was apparently also amassing a collection of at least three medieval practical miscellanies, each of which bears his reader mark. Dyngley added a recipe “for the megrene” into Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C.506, under which he endorsed it with his signature “by me henry Dyngley of Charleton yn þe peryshe of Cropthorne wryten by me þe .14. daye of auguste anno domini 1547 I beinge of þe age 32.”\textsuperscript{94} Wellcome Library MS 5262, another collection of vernacular medical recipes, bears his signature on folio 12r. And in British Library Royal MS 17 A.xxxii, Dyngley added his name and the date 1560 over several folios.\textsuperscript{95}

We know from Dyngley’s ownership marks on these three different medical miscellanies that he had an interest in medieval manuscripts, practical knowledge, or both. But evidence left within these manuscripts also paints a picture of Dyngley as a member of a social milieu that has received considerable attention from historians of Tudor politics: the officeholding yeoman or gentleman with “hot Protestant” tendencies. In case studies of individual parishes, social historians have noted that late Tudor and Stuart England tended to stratify at the local level so that the parish and county officials were distinguished not just by socioeconomic advantage over their poorer neighbors, but

\textsuperscript{93} Dyngley was plaintiff in a plea against the Dean and Chapter of Worcester Cathedral for rights to lands appertaining to his manor at Charlton. Dyngley’s plea is not dated, but the plea is addressed to Nicholas Bacon, Keeper of the Great Seal (1558–1579) and the crown’s response looks to be dated “anno regne E tertio,” which would place the proceeding sometime in 1560–1561; The National Archives of the UK, C 3/52/26.

\textsuperscript{94} Bodleian MS Rawlinson C.506, f. 123r.

\textsuperscript{95} BL Royal MS 17 A.xxxii, ff. 5r, 89r, and 119r.
also by their adoption of hardline Protestant beliefs. Dyngley’s case appears to corroborate their hypothesis.

The trail of clues to Dyngley’s religious beliefs begins in Wellcome 5262. The manuscript looks to have been created in the early fifteenth century, and elements within the manuscript suggest that it may have been commissioned by or for a religious house. The first three folios are filled with full-page illustrations of saints, and at the close of the manuscript, a later fifteenth-century hand has added a prayer dedicated to St. Kenelm, patron saint of Winchcombe Abbey in Gloucestershire. Thus it seems likely that the manuscript was owned by the abbey in the fifteenth century. Of note is the fact that Dyngley’s manor at Charlton in Worcestershire was only twenty miles from Winchcombe. We have no way of knowing exactly how Dyngley acquired this volume of medical recipes, but it is entirely possible that he took possession directly from the Abbey, possibly following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539–40 and the subsequent liquidation of monastic libraries.

Like the pious Richard Nix, Bishop of Norwich, who obliterated less-than-orthodox charms from his “librum medisine,” Dyngley too made cancellations and erasures in his practical manuscripts. Most notably, he partially obscured all of the illustrations of saints from within Wellcome MS 5262 using smeared black ink, and used

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97 Illustrations of saints, ff. 1–3, 7v; prayer to St. Kenelm is on f. 61v; Wellcome MS 5262. The relationship between St. Kenelm and Winchcombe Abbey is noted in the Wellcome’s catalogue entry for the manuscript.
a similar technique to obliterate the charms and textual cures in Bodleian MS Rawlinson C.506. Edward VI’s “Acte for the abolishinge and puttinge awaye of diverse Bookes and Images” passed in January of 1550 did not specifically instruct subjects to obliterate religious images in personal books, but, considering the act’s hard line against books formerly used within churches and its instructions to destroy images of saints “graven carved or painted,” perhaps Dyngley took the letter of the law to heart. He “blotted or clerely put out” the images of saints in his recipe books in the same way that the act instructed English people to cross out invocations or prayers to saints within their English primers.

Dyngley was appointed Sherriff of Worcestershire by Edward VI in 1553, so if we were inclined to cynicism, we could simply chalk these reformist reader marks up to political expediency. Edward’s government was particularly zealous in its desire to stamp out vestiges of the old medieval superstitions, and as a leading man in Cropthorne, Dyngley would have needed to show compliance. But there is still one more reader mark in Dyngley’s practical manuscripts to consider, and this addition indicates that Dyngley was not merely an opportunist, but rather a man genuinely excited by the Protestant cause. On blank leaves toward the end of BL Royal MS 17 A.xxxii, Dyngley has copied the poem, “A godle exortacion for a father to his children.” The verse, printed in the first

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98 Charms are partially obscured by smeared ink in Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C.506, ff. 95r and 119; illustrations of saints partially obliterated in Wellcome MS 5262, ff. 1r-3r.
100 In the sixteenth century candidates for the position of Sheriff in England were nominated on November 12 for a term in the following year, to begin on New Year’s Day, March 25. Edward VI did not die until July 6, 1553.
edition of John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, was attributed by Foxe to the Marian martyr Robert Smith, burned at the stake in 1555. In it Smith exhorts his children to follow in his footsteps so that they too may “enter into that same lyfe / Whiche neuer shall haue end.”101 The version copied by Dyngley is not identical to that printed in Foxe, though it is very similar, suggesting perhaps that Dyngley had access to a manuscript copy of the verse circulating within like-minded Protestant circles. It may very well be that Dyngley was, indeed, one of those “hotter Protestants” who acted as the local face of Crown policy.102

We may be able to piece together a portrait of Dyngley’s religious leanings, his interest in medieval medicine, and his stature as a literate gentleman through his reader marks in practical manuscripts, but Dyngley was not an extractive, “politic” reader like Gabriel Harvey or other famous annotators of the sixteenth century.103 His additions leave much about his life and political leanings to the historian’s imagination. Yet they are still valuable first and foremost because Dyngley’s marks are far more representative of the kind of reading and writing done by large proportions of the English populace over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He signed his name, he wrote a date, he copied an excerpt of a poem. These scribal acts do seem unremarkable when compared to the copious annotations of Harvey and other “politic” readers whose particular views on the events of the day were revealed in marginalia and circulated in manuscript separates. But in emphasizing the exceptional reading and writing practices of great Tudor thinkers, it

101 Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO*, 1332.
102 Collinson, *This England*, 42.
103 Jardine and Grafton, “Studied for Action.” The concept of the “politic” reader is explained in Millstone, “Seeing Like a Statesman in Early Stuart England.”
becomes too easy to gloss over the most important takeaway from Dyngley’s reader marks: the marvelous fact of their existence at all. We can say so much more about readers like Dyngley, make educated guesses about who they were, what positions they held in society, and even what their religious views were, because the way readers interacted with their books changed over the course of the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As literacy extended throughout the landholding population in rural England and through the merchant and artisan classes in urban England, the fruits of this expansion begin to appear in the archival record in the form of a tremendous increase in letters, legal documentation, and, of course, reader marks.

Moreover, if one were to try to formulate a defining characteristic of early modern scribal habits from an—admittedly narrow—analysis of medieval practical manuscripts, it would be the following: reader marks begat reader marks. Once one reader added his or her name, date, or recipe to a manuscript, other readers follow suit. For example, we know that Richard Nix owned and made alterations to the recipes in MS Hunter 117 because he made a declaration of ownership on its leaves (“Ricardus nix possidet hunc librum medisine”). But we also know that the collection of recipes passed into other hands in the later sixteenth century, namely “george tybye,” “R. Jenkins,” “Adome Stavane,” “John Bowton,” and “Thomas Roberts,” all of whom added their names to the final leaf of the manuscript, perhaps inspired by Nix’s original ownership mark. Henry Dyngley may have been inspired to make his earliest reader mark, his signature and the date 1547 in Bodleian MS Rawlinson C.506, because Humfrey Harrison, chaplain, had

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104 Glasgow MS Hunter 117, f. 2v and 107r.
105 Glasgow MS Hunter 117, f. 112.
already added his name and a legal formula to the final leaf of the manuscript sometime in the second half of the fifteenth century.\footnote{Bodleian MS Rawlinson C.506, f. 345v.} Or perhaps the “Andrew Wynltkynson, Surgeon” who appears to be a seventeenth-century owner of Wellcome MS 5262 was inspired to add an ownership mark to that manuscript because of Dyngley’s signature already on its pages.\footnote{Wellcome MS 5262, ff. 34r and 60r.} These are but a few examples of this trend, the remainder of which are clearly listed in Appendix C. The vast majority of manuscripts listed within that appendix contain a series of reader marks from subsequent readers that span decades or even centuries.

Perhaps the explanation for broad and deep changes to English literate culture over the course of the sixteenth century lies in the simple truth that people did more reading and writing because they saw others doing more reading and writing. Historians of village and parish life have suggested that the middling sort’s desire to imitate the cultural mores and social norms of those above them in the social hierarchy drove much of their interest in literacy.\footnote{Thomas Laqueur emphasizes that economic necessity was not the driving force behind rising literacy in early modern England, but rather that literacy “allowed participation in a whole range of religious, economic, politics, and cultural activities which would otherwise have been far less accessible”; see, “The Cultural Origins of Popular Literacy in England 1500-1850,” \textit{Oxford Review of Education} 2, no. 3 (January 1, 1976): 255–75, esp. 268; Wrightson and Levine, \textit{Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700}, 153.} In turn, greater access to education and rising literacy rates among the middling sort played a crucial role in this increasing stratification of English society. The attainment of the ability to read and write among all of the upper and many of the middle ranks of English society in the early modern period meant that illiteracy
became a defining characteristic of the lower sort.\textsuperscript{109} We know all of this to be true, and yet to see it play out in reader mark after reader mark is still compelling affirmation of the transformative power of the human ability to adapt, assimilate, and appropriate the customs and habits of those whose lot seems just a bit better in the never-ending struggle to better one’s social standing.

IV. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery

Reading and writing skills were the pivot upon which England’s rural and urban middling classes sought to spring themselves into better society by the later sixteenth century. Whereas we saw at the beginning of this chapter how the elite and wealthy commissioned professional writers to create elaborate-looking book objects as markers of their status, by the later sixteenth century the English were focused not on crafting beautiful books, but beautiful verse and prose. Rather than create ostentatious and showy illuminated manuscripts, the elite of later sixteenth-century England instead circulated their compositions of verses in closed circles of manuscript exchange.\textsuperscript{110} For those without access to these elite literary circles, printed manuals like Angel Daye’s \textit{The English secretorie}, a model book for those aspiring to write beautiful “epistles and familiar letters” published in 1586, instead offered “a path-waye, so apt, plaine and easie, to any learners capacity, as the like whereof hath not at any time heretofore been delivered.”\textsuperscript{111}


\textsuperscript{111} Day, \textit{The English secretorie}. 
For the aspiring middling sort, the tradesmen, craftsmen, and landowning yeomen of rural England, model books like Daye’s were essential tools which allowed them to cultivate an appropriate scribal practice. In the 1570s tradesmen and craftsmen in rural towns in Durham and Northumberland were still mostly illiterate—one around 25% could read and write—and the same could be said of tradesmen in the far south, in Devon and Cornwall, where only 30% could read or write. Yeoman farmers from the same rural regions had achieved slightly greater literacy rates: in Northumberland in 1570, 46% of yeoman farmers were literate, and that figure was considerably larger—57% literacy—for Devon and Cornwall. Yet despite what were considerable rises in literacy among rural tradesmen and farmers, these figures also reveal that even by the later sixteenth-century, even among well-off landowning yeoman, around half of one’s peers would have been starkly aware of a cultural differentiation resulting from their illiteracy. They would have been looking to emulate the literate habits of their friends and neighbors.

This certainly appears to have been the case for a group of yeomen living in the parish of Dronfield, Derbyshire, just a few miles south of the town of Sheffield, whose names all appear within Cambridge University Library MS Ee.1.13. The manuscript contains what were once two separate fifteenth-century practical manuscripts and one small booklet of sixteenth-century alchemical recipes. It is unclear when the

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112 Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order: Reading & Writing in Tudor & Stuart England, 146, fig. 7.3, and 150, fig. 7.5.
113 The second manuscript bound into CUL MS Ee.1.13, ff. 97–141, contains a urinary (ff. 97–101), treatises on planting and grafting (ff. 109–29), instructions for midwifery (ff. 129v–130v), recipes for creating dyed cloth (ff. 131–35), and more miscellaneous recipes, including some for ink and book-making (ff. 135–141). The third manuscript (ff. 142–51) was its own paper booklet, copied in the mid-sixteenth century with alchemical recipes and illustrations.
alchemical recipe book was added to the two fifteenth-century miscellanies, but the two medieval manuscripts were already joined together when they circulated in Dronfield parish. Throughout both manuscripts, on the margins of the alphabetized herbal that comprises the first manuscript, and dotting the margins of the urinary, medical recipes, treatises on planting and grafting, and directions for cloth-dyeing that fill the second manuscript, are dozens of reader marks.\textsuperscript{114}

The first reader mark in the manuscript, just alongside the entry for “Beteyn” (betony) in the herbal, belongs to a Christopher Selyoke: “Crestofer Selyoke owthe this boke you mak hym A good man est. Amen.”\textsuperscript{115} Selyok was a member of a prominent family in northern Derbyshire. Since 1324 the family had lived at Hazelbarrow manor in the parish of Norton, closer to the town of Sheffield.\textsuperscript{116} Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Selyok family alternately sold and reacquired land within Norton, until on 1 June 1567, George Selyok, either the brother or father of Christopher, purchased the manor of Dronfield in Dronfield parish, just to the south of Norton.\textsuperscript{117} Much further on in the manuscript, on folio 82, it appears that Christopher made another mark: “Thys indentur mad the ix day of march in the first yeare of the reay[n].” The hand is too late to correspond with Henry VIII’s first regnal year (1509), meaning that Christopher Selyok probably interacted with the manuscript sometime between 1547 and

\textsuperscript{115} CUL MS Ee.1.13, f. 17r.
\textsuperscript{116} SCA NSC/1/1/5.
\textsuperscript{117} SCA Ce R/12.
1558, at least one and perhaps two decades before the Selyok family took possession of Dronfield manor in 1567.\textsuperscript{118}

We cannot know for certain which items from the Selyok estate at Hazelbarrow were subsequently brought to their new residence at Dronfield in 1567, but it is very possible that Christopher Selyok’s two medieval practical miscellanies (probably already bound together) made the three-mile-long journey with the family. However they arrived, reader marks within the manuscripts make clear that they were circulating among the residents of Dronfield by the early 1570s. Indeed, although Selyok only made two marks in the manuscript, both cited above, his two marks appear to have inspired others in Dronfield to follow his lead. Following Selyok’s ownership mark on folio 17r, the next reader mark in the manuscript belongs to Henry Hancocke, who added his own ownership phrase, “Henry Hancocke of Stuble in the county of darby woeth [oweth?] theys bockk god send hem Wyal to sped as for all.”\textsuperscript{119} It is perhaps noteworthy that Hancocke’s ownership mark, though not a direct copy of Selyok’s, mirrors it quite closely. Hancocke added another ownership mark on folio 103v (“henry hancocke of stuble oweth this book”), and his signature appears on folios 39v, 61v, 65v, 66r, 81v, 92r, and 107r (fig. 4.3, below).

Like several of the post-print readers discussed above, Hancocke found reasons to date many of his additions, making it easy to construct a timeline for his interaction with

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{118} CUL MS Ee.1.13, f. 82r. My hunch is that the regnal year refers to Elizabeth, dating the mark to March 1558/9. Christopher Selyok’s name appears in only one archival record: a sale of a tenement in Hymmysworth in the parish of Norton dated to 17 April 1584. In that record, Christopher is listed as a gentleman of London, suggesting perhaps that he was a younger son of the Selyok family and chose to relocate to London in later adulthood as the Selyok family’s fortunes declined; SCA OD/771.\textsuperscript{119} CUL MS Ee.1.13, f. 19r.}
The dates given in the manuscript range from 1571 to 1577, indicating that Hancocke had access to the manuscript in the decade immediately after the Selyoks’ possession of Dronfield manor. Over the course of these years and perhaps beyond, Hancocke used this practical manuscript to copy excerpts of legal agreements, as well as personal observations and bits of correspondence. In 1572 he added a brief note of concern over his master’s health (“Mi mester is sic at heys hart wisen hey wyll amend I cannct tell”) to a blank leaf at the close of the herbal. He copied out the opening salutations of various letters to members of his community, practiced writing aphorisms, and in the upper margin of one leaf gave instructions for how to properly pray: “first of all after mette you most thank god of theys geyftes gret and low and pres your hevenly kyng and pres hem of heys dear blesseyng for ever and ever amen.”

By 1571, the earliest date given by Hancocke in his reader marks, Hancocke and his wife, Elizabeth, had welcomed six children to their family, and had buried their firstborn. By 1577, the latest date Hancocke wrote in the manuscript, two more children had been born and another buried. The eldest to survive infancy, a daughter, Margaret,

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120 CUL MS Ee.1.13, f. 65v, 81v, and 96v.
121 CUL MS Ee.1.13, f. 94v.
122 CUL MS Ee.1.13, ff. 20r, 43v, 96v, and 104r. The correspondence on f. 96v is addressed to “my loveyng foryn Thames hancok of Stubble” and “Robert Hepon Stow of Dronfield.” Robert Hepponstall and Thomas Hancocke were both contemporaries of Henry, and both have marriages recorded in the Dronfield parish register, Hepponstall’s on 29 November 1561 and Thomas Hancocke’s on 14 November 1563; DRO, D2441/A/PI. The marginal addition on f. 104r is addressed to “Henry Arttar.”
123 On three subsequent leaves, Hancocke rewrote the same phrase: “the father sed to the sone blessed be that tim that this what be gone”; CUL MS Ee.1.13, ff. 47v, 48r, and 48v.
124 CUL MS Ee.1.13, f. 40r.
125 The parish register for Dronfield lists his marriage to Elizabeth Calton as taking place on 26 January 1560. DRO D2441/A/PI.
also appears to have left her signature on the pages of the manuscript’s leaves.\textsuperscript{126} Besides these reader marks, only the lists of births, marriages, and deaths in the Dronfield parish register remain to establish the parameters of Hancocke’s life, and they are not much to go on. If anything stands out from this evidence it is the recognition that Hancocke was fairly unexceptional. He could read and write, of course, which perhaps elevated him to the upper ranks of householders in the village of Stubley in northern Derbyshire, but his handwriting is quite rough—barely legible at times—and his spelling, even given the inconsistencies of sixteenth-century orthography, suggests that he was not a well-educated man. Like so many others surveyed in this chapter, Hancocke used this practical manuscript to record dates, correspondence, and bits of information relevant to his life.

If these were all the reader marks in CUL MS Ee.1.13, then Hancocke’s interaction with the manuscript would be interesting, but perhaps not particularly illuminating of changing attitudes toward writing in rural England. Ten other names appear within the manuscript, however, most of them identifiable contemporaries of Hancocke’s within the parish of Dronfield and surrounding areas. One of these names appears in an ownership mark just underneath Hancocke’s signature on folio 39v: “Wylliam Haselam of honfeld is my name and wyth my hand I wrot the same” (fig. 4.3).\textsuperscript{127} Haslam’s name appears again in two other reader additions to the manuscript, the only two in Latin.\textsuperscript{128} In addition, an excerpt of an indenture between “will haslam of

\textsuperscript{126} “Margaret Hancocke” is written at the bottom of f. 62v, CUL MS Ee.1.13. Margaret’s baptism is entered into the Dronfield parish register for 11 October 1562; DRO D2441/A/PI.
\textsuperscript{127} CUL MS Ee.1.13, f. 39v.
\textsuperscript{128} “quod ego Wyllelmys Haslam” and “William Haslam est nomen meam”; CUL MS Ee.1.13, ff. 62v and 95r.
Dronfield in the conty of Darby yeoman” and “Elizabeth apsen” is copied on to the bottom margin of folio 82r and continues on the bottom of folio 81v. And, like Hancocke, Haslam’s life within the parish of Dronfield is reflected in the parish register and in other archival records. The register records the baptisms of six Haslam children from 1564 to 1573. Haslam’s signature was added as witness to an indenture for a sale of land in Derbyshire in 1558, and his name appears again in a quitclaim deed from 1573 in which the parcel of land being deeded is described as abutting Haslam’s in Brownfield in a nearby village.

Figure 4.3: Reader marks and sketches. The upper margin contains the signature “Henry Hancoke of stuble” while the left margin contains the mark “Wylliam Hasslam of honfeld is my nam and with my hand I wrot the sam”; CUL MS Ee.1.13, f. 39v.

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129 DRO D2441/A/PI.
130 SCA, JC/1/169.
Given this evidence that Haslam was a contemporary of Hancocke’s living near Dronfield, one might surmise that the miscellanies once owned by Selyok and Hancocke simply passed to Haslam, and that Haslam proceeded to follow Hancocke and Selyok’s lead and contribute his own set of reader marks. But there are still more names and reader marks in CUL MS Ee.1.13 that challenge this interpretation. The name “Robert Hepon Stow”—probably Robert Heponstall who married Grace Treeton on 29 November 1561—is written on folio 40v. Another marginal mark dated the “x day of August in the yeare of owr lord 1573” is attributed to “Thomas Coutlove” whose marriage in 1569 and death in 1587 are both recorded in the Dronfield parish register. Still another marginal mark, this one written upside down at the bottom of folio 50r, appears to be an excerpt of a correspondence between “William Stenrod of Dronfield” and “Mathay Masone of London” giving “my most harti commendacion unto yew.” The names Robert Barker, Richard Gapson, Robert Wesdin, and Richard Sheather also appear in reader marks, many written in the first person, as in the reader mark on the bottom of folio 75r: “Rychard Sheather of Sheffield is my name and with my hand I wrote the same In the name of god amen I Robart Wesding of toutle in the perishe of dronfeld in the conty of darby yeoman.” Finally, on the very last folio of the manuscript, a “Rychard Slackes” has doodled a face in profile under the date 1572 and copied out what appears to be the opening line of his will and testament (“being sike in bodye but whole”).

In this one manuscript, seventeen different names appear in reader marks, most of which can be identified as members of the parish of Dronfield through events recorded in

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131 CUL MS Ee.1.13, f. 49v.
132 CUL MS Ee.1.13, f. 139r.
the parish register. What could be better evidence of the expanding culture of literacy in rural England than a manuscript filled with signatures, affidavits, and excerpts of correspondence attributed to men who call themselves “yeomen”? Here is evidence of a single practical manuscript circulating among friends and neighbors in a single parish, each man (and one woman) taking the opportunity to practice his or her hand with a signature, copy down a bit of a letter, or transcribe a portion of a document. As the manuscript continued to pass from hand to hand, it served as an ideal venue for yeomen in northern Derbyshire to practice the necessary writing formulae and conventions through which they would secure their property, establish relationships of credit, and communicate with others of their social status and above them in Tudor England. Perhaps these friends and neighbors passed around a medieval miscellany because it was still quite useful to them as a repository of medical and agricultural knowledge, and, inspired by the original reader mark of the gentleman Christopher Selyok, tried their own hands at the practice.

But is that what happened to CUL MS Ee.1.13? Was it passed from hand to hand among the villagers of Dronfield? There are a few oddities to the reader marks in this medieval miscellany that resist this explanation. First, the handwriting used in the reader marks throughout the manuscript, except for that of Christopher Selyok, is so consistent that it appears to have come from a single hand. Even when reader marks are copied in the first person, as in the identifying marks of Richard Sheather and Robert Wesding on folio 75r cited above, both first-person ownership phrases appear one after the other within the same reader mark, in the same margin, by the same hand. The hand that wrote those names also appears to have written the dated readership mark signed “I Thomas
Coutlove,” the excerpt of correspondence between “Wylliam Stenrod of Dronfield” and “Matthay Mason,” and the affidavit “In the name of god and in the x day of januari in the year of owr Lord 1572 I Robert Barkar of brampton in the conty of” on folio 74v.\textsuperscript{133} Given that Henry Hancocke’s name appears most often throughout the manuscript in the same hand as these numerous other names, and that only he and Christopher Selyok appear to have written out ownership phrases (“Crestofer Selyok owthe this boke” and “Henry Hancocke of Stuble […] woeth theys bockk”), it seems to me equally probable that Henry Hancocke added all of the copious reader marks into CUL MS Ee.1.13.

But if Hancocke wrote all of these marks—and it should be said that comparison of handwriting is no exact science—what could be the explanation for this behavior? If the manuscript was not shared among neighbors, why did Hancock write phrases of identification and ownership for other yeomen in his parish? It may be that Hancock worked in some official capacity copying legal documents, deeds, and records for the local parish as filicer, and simply practiced copying excerpts of official writing on what spare paper he had available: the margins of an old collection of herbal lore and medical remedies. If that were the case, however, it is hard to explain why Hancock has such a rough and unprofessional-looking hand. A more likely explanation in my view is that Hancocke’s numerous reader marks illustrate more than a scribe’s interest in practicing his handwriting. If Hancock did do all these bits of official writing himself—many of them containing official salutations and legal titles for other men—this may indicate his awareness of the critical role of writing in establishing one’s authority and social status in Tudor England. Perhaps the repetition of the same identifying phrases, like “In the name

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 49v and 50r.
of god amen I [name],” within his reader marks indicate that Hancocke was copying witness marks from documents in an effort to mimic their style.

Indeed, most of the many names copied into CUL MS Ee.1.13 appear in excerpts of indentures, in affidavits of witness, or in ownership marks. What these written phrases all have in common is that they establish the authority of an individual through his or her ability to write that authority. For Hancocke, who never identifies himself as a yeoman within the manuscript, but who may have taken pains to record legal excerpts and correspondences of numerous other “yeomen” identified as such, these fragments and snippets of official writing were fundamental to the way he understood the other men’s privilege. The men whose names appear in CUL MS Ee.1.13 were all part of the literate culture of Dronfield parish; their status and authority could not be separated from their ability to inscribe (literally) that status and authority onto the page. It is clear from his ownership marks that Hancocke had also entered into the literate culture of Dronfield parish, and perhaps, in finally entering this world, he recognized the tremendous benefits and privileges afforded to those around him who were also members. By copying out opening salutations and phrases of identification, Hancocke was anticipating what would become a foundational practice for men and women wishing to enter into polite, and powerful society: the practice of letter writing. Though his reader marks predate by over a decade the publication of The English secretorie, Hancocke’s efforts to mimic the style of others in his community suggest that he was aware that affecting a certain voice and style in writing was critical to his position within this literate community. It was not enough for Hancocke to read or to own written documents or even to be able to write his
name. For a man on the rise in later Elizabethan England, writing was no mere practical skill; it was becoming a social and political art form.

V. Conclusion

Henry Hancocke’s reader marks, along with so many others in practical manuscripts, can provide only anecdotal evidence of an expanding culture of literacy and appreciation for writing among the English population. They do not reveal, for example, the precise proportion of the population of Dronfield who could write. Yet, even so, efforts to transcribe the reader marks in CUL MS Ee.1.13 have revealed that Hancocke was one of several men with literate ability in the 1570s in rural England; his daughter’s signature within the same manuscript suggests that he passed on the skill to his children. A broad view of reader marks found within practical manuscripts, as surveyed in this chapter, confirms that literacy rates were rising and far more people had the ability to leave a mark in a manuscript in 1575 than they did in 1400.

But if these reader marks cannot necessarily provide quantitative evidence of changes to scribal practice and literate culture over the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries, they do certainly provide qualitative evidence. When examined in total, we see patterns emerge: far more reader marks from laymen and secular clergy begin to appear from the second half of the fifteenth century onward; readers were more likely to date their additions following the advent of the press; the best indication that a reader would mark up a manuscript was if a previous reader had already done so. In every one of these generalizations we detect a shared underlying theme: the informal writing spaces of practical miscellanies, like margins or blank leaves, were ideal spaces for men and
women to practice the letterforms and turns of phrase that would position them within literate culture. Whether these readers were simply trying to mimic letterforms, as in the miscellany discussed at the end of section one, or were copying out legal formulae as in Hancocke’s manuscript, these reader marks reveal the quotidian practices of writing through which English people established themselves within more formal networks of literate exchange.

This chapter has attempted to chart the uses put to older, medieval collections of practical knowledge as opposed to the prolific production of manuscripts by early modern readers and writers. There is already a wealth of excellent scholarship on the early modern recipe book and on early modern manuscript production more generally, and the conclusions reached in this chapter should be joined with those studies to paint a fuller picture of the circulation of handwritten knowledge within early modern England. Yet importantly, by focusing on reader marks in manuscripts that remained in use from 1400 to 1600 this chapter has revealed changes to scribal practices that would not be visible in a shorter-term study. Practical manuscripts afford us this long view because they remained relevant, but other genres of medieval writing could certainly be studied in like manner. Yet there is something to be said for the analysis of reader marks in practical manuscripts over other genres, because their quotidian qualities made them ready spaces for all kinds of reader additions. For a reader like Henry Dyngley, a practical manuscript filled with medical recipes and instructions was still a perfectly reasonable place to copy out a godly poem. For Henry Hancocke, a fifteenth-century herbal was an ideal location for practicing the turns of phrase that signaled authority and status among his contemporaries in the parish of Dronfield.
But perhaps the greatest takeaway from this chapter is simply the ability to put a few names and places to the experience of rising literacy among the men and women living outside London in sixteenth-century England. Important studies of England’s “public sphere” and its “public politics” do still tend to center on the English court, and on the power that extended from the court through peripheral networks of literate men. To be fair, this is where most of the evidence points. Still, though, it is useful to understand that there were men like Henry Hancocke, William Haslam, Thomas Coutlove and others living far outside the ambit of courtly influence who nevertheless understood their relationship to authority, and to one another, through written exchanges. These men did not leave reader marks that illustrate their thoughts on the religious settlement of 1559, their opinions on the Elizabethan crisis of succession, or on her potential French marriage. In that sense, they get us no closer to the origins of a “public sphere.” Nevertheless, by tracing the gradual expansion of writing ability as illustrated in the leaves of practical manuscripts, this chapter has made it possible to imagine the emerging habits of mind and practices of the hand that made it possible for the English to participate in the new world of “public politics” that would shape so much of life in seventeenth-century England.
CONCLUSION

“The world is a booke: the words and actions of men Commentaries upon that volume: The former lyke manuscripts priuate: the latter common lyke things printed.”

–Sir William Cornwallis, *Essayes*, 1600

By 1600, the close of the period covered in this dissertation, the perceived differences between manuscript and print were apparently so evident to the English reader that Sir William Cornwallis felt they could support a metaphor for the entirety of human experience. According to Cornwallis, within the world of the book—or the book of the world, depending on your perspective—words and actions operated on different planes, exactly like manuscripts and printed books. Both served their particular function, each in their own way: one in private, the other in public. That such a sentiment could be expressed, and with so little concern to explain or contextualize it for the reader, goes a long way to illustrating the tremendous changes to the English media environment over the course of the sixteenth century. Indeed, for historians of the book, or of “print culture” in particular, Cornwallis’s words are something of an affirmation.

One could argue that the whole field of scholarship dedicated to the coming of the book rests on Cornwallis’s premise: that the material differences between print and manuscript evolved into differences of valuation, interpretation, and perception. Yet scholars differ markedly over when that happened in Europe and why. This dissertation has offered yet another narrative of this process through attention to the manuscript culture that immediately preceded the coming of the press to England. I have made the

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case that this sort of comparative analysis is mandatory within the field of book history, a
field predicated on a baseline assumption that significant social and cultural change can
be explained through differences between two media forms. Print—and whatever cultural
attributes that monolithic descriptor entails within it—can only be invoked as an
explanatory factor against something else, whether that “something else” is manuscript
culture “pre-print,” or whether it is manuscripts circulating in private in contrast to
“common” print.

Because of sustained attention to the manuscripts circulating in England prior to
the coming of the press, this dissertation has demonstrated that significant threads of
continuity cross the divide from medieval to early modern England. Sixteenth-century
people needed to know how to ease a toothache, how to make pigments and inks, how to
best catch fish, how to make the right sauce, or how to graft fruit on to an apple tree just
as fifteenth-century people did. In terms of these everyday activities, very little changed
from 1400 to 1600. In this way, practical texts help to answer difficult historical
questions about the degree to which any culture can change when everyday habits of life
remain the same. Through analysis of texts that reveal quotidian patterns of thought and
behavior, this dissertation has revealed that currents of transformation can move below
the surface, gradually altering how people understood their access to knowledge and
authority. This sort of analysis thereby offers a counterpoint to narratives of stasis within
English society over the course of the sixteenth century. Much can stay the same within
the fabric of daily life even in the midst of profound cultural shifts.

Christopher Haigh famously argued that in 1590 just as in 1530, English people “went
to church: they prayed again to their God, learned again how to be good, and went off
I have argued that print did initiate a host of changes to the way people read, collected, and recorded knowledge, though these changes only become apparent with a long view of English book culture. The changes wrought by the advent of the press were gradual. If there was a “print revolution” in England, it certainly did not take place in the last decades of the fifteenth century or even the first decades of the sixteenth. Instead, I have demonstrated that it took until 1550 or so before anything approaching “print culture” might be said to have superseded the traditions of manuscript. Moreover, this dissertation has shown that the manuscript culture of pre-print England is just as critical to our understanding of a so-called “print revolution” as is attention to the printed book, publishers, and the technology of the press. Chapter 1 offered a view of a robust and thriving world of manuscript production, circulation, and ownership in fifteenth-century England. Indeed, I demonstrated that in important ways, patterns of later medieval manuscript production and ownership anticipated many of the structures of the later print industry. With this vibrant manuscript culture in mind, it becomes easy to see why printers attempted to replicate an already successful enterprise, and why only incremental changes were introduced to the format and composition of printed books. The commercial print market did eventually transform how people understood the purpose, function, and value of a book, but these changes were slow to develop and even slower to take hold.

Moreover, none of the changes wrought by the press were determined by some quality inherent to print but lacking in manuscript. Indeed, in Chapter 2 I offered the

opposite narrative. I argued that the technological limitations of the press and the poor craftsmanship of English woodcutters meant that important elements of manuscript culture could not be replicated in print. Religious objections to imagery certainly encouraged further collapse of medieval traditions of illustration, but much of the damage to the tradition of pictorial prognostication could be attributed to the limitations of the English printed book. In Chapter 3, I suggested that printed recipe books did evolve into book objects that claimed to be different from what had come before in manuscript, but not because the qualities of moveable type or the reproductive capacity of the press inevitably altered people’s reception of practical texts. Instead, I demonstrated that the recipes published in printed collections were much the same as those circulating in manuscript. It was competition among printers within a market glutted with practical texts that led to surface-level changes in how these texts were presented to readers.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I illustrated the incredible longevity of medieval manuscripts. Not only did the proliferation of printed recipe books and instructional treatises fail to displace the medieval manuscripts that were already in circulation, that chapter offered evidence that print actually increased attention to these century-old repositories of knowledge.

Because I have focused so completely on the important influence of medieval manuscripts to the development of early modern print culture, this dissertation has offered copious evidence of readers returning to medieval manuscripts in the early modern era, bringing with them attitudes developed in relationship to a world of printed books. Thomas Buttus, for example, dated and organized the medieval recipes he copied into a neat table of contents in his mid-sixteenth-century manuscript recipe book. Yet
there are certainly examples of the opposite phenomena: readers interacting with printed books and bringing with them many of the conventions of earlier manuscript culture. For example, Cambridge University Library holds a single volume containing three of Richard Banckes’s early printed medical editions—the *Vertues & propyrette of herbes, The treasure of pore men,* and *The seynge of urynes*—bound one after the other, not unlike a manuscript miscellany, with reader marginalia added to boot.³ There is the 1565 edition of *An almanacke, and prognostication* held at the Folger Shakespeare Library, bound within a cover of parchment from medieval manuscript waste and designed with blank pages opposite every month’s chart within which the reader could jot down notes or observations. It is an artifact that completely blurs the lines between manuscript and print.⁴ Many more examples certainly exist, and a study that considers the cross-pollination that goes both ways—from manuscript to print and from print to manuscript—would present a fuller picture of sixteenth-century reading culture. Which is

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³ *Here begynmeth a newe boke of medecynes intytulyd or callyd the Treasure of pore men,* Cambridge University Library Sel.5.175, STC 24199 (London: Rycherd Bankes, 1526); *Here begynmeth a newe marer, ye whiche sheweth and treateth of the vertues & propertes of herbes,* Cambridge University Library Sel.5.175, STC 13175.2 (London: Rycharde Banckes, 1526); *Here begynmeth the seynge of urynes,* Cambridge University Library Sel.5.175, STC 22153a (London: By [J. Rastell for] Rycharde Bankys, 1526). The book came to the Cambridge University Library in 1715 from the collection of John Moore, Bishop of Ely, whose books were purchased by George I and gifted to the library. The three medical tracts were already bound together in the eighteenth century, and may have been together as early as the sixteenth-century. The reader marks throughout the three tracts are all from the same mid-sixteenth-century hand, meaning that at the very least all three tracts were owned by the same reader in the sixteenth century. My thanks go to Mr. Liam Sims, Rare Book Specialist at Cambridge University Library, for sharing information on the acquisition history and binding of this volume.

all to say that there is more work to be done even within the relatively small genre of practical books.

Yet even as it stands with its manuscript-centric focus, this dissertation has already offered a very complex picture of the transition from one media culture to another. One might rightly offer criticism that this complex picture is yet another “complicating” narrative, one that chips away at something (the “print revolution” thesis) that was never going to hold up to close analysis in the first place without offering a new narrative or timeline to take its place. A more “complicated” picture of the transition from manuscript to print might be more accurate, but what does it tell us about early modern culture and the people who experienced this transition? What answers can we take away from a close analysis of readers and their practical books?

For one, each chapter has intervened within what are foundational debates about the nature of early modern English culture. As I argued at the start of this dissertation, analysis of practical books did not answer the “why” questions for the success of Reformation, the rise of a worldview tied to observation and discovery, or the development of a public sphere. Yet by focusing on sources tied to everyday interactions with the written word and with the exchange and collection of knowledge, I have illustrated how ideological changes might be internalized by average English people through a series of minor changes to practices: reading practice, the practice of knowledge collection, or scribal practice. The sources analyzed in this dissertation do not directly convey changes to religious belief, or to epistemologies pertaining to the natural world, or to articulations of political authority, and yet they help us to understand the many incremental shifts in perspective that generated these profound cultural shifts.
In closing, and echoing Sir William Cornwallis above, I would contend that the defining narrative of this dissertation relates the gradual recognition among sixteenth-century readers that the world in which they lived was strikingly different from that of their grandparents, or perhaps even their parents. Something about the introduction of print helped to accelerate the pace of change in early modern England. In each of the three case-study chapters in this dissertation, I began with a vignette of a sixteenth-century reader interacting with, or responding to, medieval practical manuscripts. George Walker sketched out pictorial prognostications; Catherine Tollemache wrote her name on the inside cover of a medieval miscellany; and Thomas Buttus copied out recipes from “dyvers old Englyshe bookes” into his personal collection. Each of these early modern people still had access to the world of fifteenth-century manuscripts. Yet in each chapter I argued that these sixteenth-century readers approached medieval sources with an awareness of their distance from that culture. Whereas there is little evidence that readers from 1476 to 1520 or so recognized a sharp difference between fifteenth-century manuscripts and printed books, the same could not be said for Walker, Tollemache, or Buttus, or indeed most English readers from about 1550 onwards.

Just like the distinction between private and “common” articulated by Cornwallis above, Walker, Tollemache, and Buttus’s discernment of the past hinged on perceived differences between manuscripts and printed books. Medieval manuscripts took on cultural attributes because of their early modern readers’ perception that the world was now dominated by print. The same feeling that drove John Foxe to remark on the “superfluous plenty” of books in early modern England or Humphrey Baker to exclaim that people were “more inventive, & enclined also to read & to have understandynge”
than ever before, also drove readers like George Walker, Catherine Tollemache, or Thomas Buttus to return to medieval manuscript to reacquaint themselves with a world that was slipping away. The great irony of this sense of pastness within the realm of practical knowledge is that so little of it had changed from 1400 to 1600. Which is why these books prove to be such remarkable sources for studying the impact of new media on English culture: the texts remained the same, but those Gentyll readers were altogether different.
## APPENDIX A

### Pictorial Almanacs and Prognostications

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## APPENDIX B

Fifteenth-century practical miscellanies, format and contents

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APPENDIX C

Datable or attributable reader marks in fifteenth-century practical manuscripts

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<th>Approx. date of marks</th>
<th>Folios</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
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<tr>
<td>MS Ashmole 1378</td>
<td>1490–1520</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>1550-1600</td>
<td>f. 30r</td>
<td>Ihus be my sped in grace and virtue to prased, God save the Quen Amen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS Ashmole 1389 1</td>
<td>1490–1520</td>
<td>William Aderston</td>
<td>1490-1510</td>
<td>f. 111v</td>
<td>with this oure gode helyd pro wyllys Eleud? and the mayor of Notyngum</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>William Aderston</td>
<td>1490-1510</td>
<td>f. 14r</td>
<td>Probatum est per me W Aderston</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>William Aderston</td>
<td>1490-1510</td>
<td>f. 77r</td>
<td>Rychard Benet at bottom of recipe, top half</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Pro J. Shapley, at bottom of recipe</td>
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<td>MS Ashmole 1393 1</td>
<td>1450–1500</td>
<td>Thomas Mydellton</td>
<td>1560-1600</td>
<td>f. 5r</td>
<td>Maner mesureth myghtynes / quod Myddelton / myrthe maketh merrye myndes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>f. 6v</td>
<td>/ many men many myndes</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Signature: Thomas Middleton (upside down)</td>
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<td>MS Ashmole 1393 2</td>
<td>1450–1500</td>
<td>John Green</td>
<td>1470-1510</td>
<td>f. 18r</td>
<td>Pateat universis per presentes me Johannem Grene clericum</td>
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<td>de Bristoll recepi de Johanne Compoton centum solius</td>
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<td>sterlingorum in partem solucionem decem librarum in quibus</td>
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<td>michi tenetur secundum formam ciusdam scripti obligatorii</td>
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<td>viginti librarum prout in eadem scripto</td>
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<td>MS Ashmole 1438 3</td>
<td>1450–1500</td>
<td>Nicolas Noosbett/Nesbett?</td>
<td>1440-1480</td>
<td>f. 29r</td>
<td>Signature in top margin, Nicolas Noosbett</td>
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<td>1450–1500</td>
<td>Nicolas Noosbett/Nesbett?</td>
<td>1440-1480</td>
<td>f. 31r</td>
<td>I vyse to be at yow my selfe als sone as I may have space &amp; I bolte yng yow mo staunchars than þe þat er mor strange. And I pray yow to luke agayn I cum how þat þe buke may be getyn þat ys person had at selby for the quarters whete. þe parson ye sade awei alyts fro ye nonnys of appylton &amp; be ye rude a schall dysprovye it to yow when I cum</td>
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<td>MS Ashmole 1438 3</td>
<td>1450–1500</td>
<td>Nicholas Noosbet/Nesbett?</td>
<td>1500-1520</td>
<td>f. 38v</td>
<td>Itemized list of names and debts owed or collected</td>
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<td>MS Ashmole 1438 6</td>
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<td>John Talour</td>
<td>1470-1500</td>
<td>f. 72</td>
<td>Þes be the parselles of John Talour of Stroude [followed by an itemized list of his household goods]</td>
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<td>MS Ashmole 1443</td>
<td>1400–50</td>
<td>Edmundus Peccham</td>
<td>1400-1450</td>
<td>f. 1r</td>
<td>Edmundus Peccham</td>
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<td>Robartus Janet</td>
<td>1475-1535</td>
<td>f. 25r</td>
<td>Thys ys Ursula Pett forton (next to a prognostication)</td>
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<td>Robartus Janet</td>
<td>1475-1525</td>
<td>f. 36r</td>
<td>Robertus Janet in (at top)</td>
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<td>Thomas Jentte</td>
<td>1470-1500</td>
<td>f. 30v</td>
<td>Thomas Jentte I Recommend me to you and I wold be right glade to know of yowre Good helthe the cauuse of my wrytynge to yow at thyhs tym ey had? suche bargyn as was mad between master vecar &amp; me, hade went that master vecar wold a dalt mor kyndlye wt me then he dyd at my [p?]retened? when I depertyd laste fro hym yet I pray yow Recommend to hym no mor to yow at thyhs tym by th...?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>John Grand</td>
<td>1470-1500</td>
<td>f. 30v</td>
<td>John Grand of Stowmarket</td>
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<td>John Corpar</td>
<td>1470-1500</td>
<td>f. 37v</td>
<td>per me John Corpar</td>
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<td>1400–50</td>
<td>G. Martyn</td>
<td>1568</td>
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<td>1475–1500</td>
<td>John Tyryngham</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 33r</td>
<td>Fesicians, Mr Lestere, Mr Thomas, Mr Clarke, Mr Mathewe, Me Maycote of þe charturious. Surgeons, Mr Roberd, Lawrens in Fridays strete, Jamys Scotte, T. Horne</td>
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<td>MS Ashmole 1481 5</td>
<td>1475–1500</td>
<td>William Alyn</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 33r</td>
<td>Thomas Tyryngham est possessor hujus libr / Qui scripsit carmen, Willielmus Alyn sit sibi nomen / Et omnibus est notum quod multum diligit potum / Nunc finem feci, da mihi quod merui</td>
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<td>John Tyryngham</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 33v</td>
<td>Obituarium de familiae Tyryngham, a Johanne de T. anno 1270 usqye Joh. de T. qui ob. 1484</td>
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<td>Reader</td>
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<td>MS Ashmole 1498</td>
<td>1400-1450</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>1500-1550</td>
<td>f. 97v</td>
<td>Ryght honorable and welbeloved frynd Robartus ophthalmus?</td>
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<td>MS Rawlinson A.393</td>
<td>1529</td>
<td>Jane Salter</td>
<td>1600-1650</td>
<td>f. 31r</td>
<td>Jane Salter is my name</td>
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<td>George Findurne</td>
<td>1530-1540</td>
<td>f. 89v</td>
<td>Probatum est per me ipsum georgen findurne</td>
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<td>MS Rawlinson C.81</td>
<td>1450–1500</td>
<td>Thomas Prestall</td>
<td>1500-1550</td>
<td>f. 60v</td>
<td>Thomas Prestall</td>
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<td>Anonymus</td>
<td>1450-1500</td>
<td>f. 60v</td>
<td>Rygth trusty &amp; welbelovyd modyr I recomende me unto yow</td>
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<td>Thomas Rochester</td>
<td>1500-1550</td>
<td>f. 8v</td>
<td>De Pershore [Pershore Abbey, Worcestershire]</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>RR de T</td>
<td>1550-1650</td>
<td>f. 8v</td>
<td>Thomas Rochester for Thomas</td>
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<td>Hic liber fuit quondam RR de T</td>
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<td>MS Rawlinson C.506</td>
<td>1400–25</td>
<td>Henry Dyngley</td>
<td>1547</td>
<td>f. 123r</td>
<td>by me Henry Dyngley of Carleton yn the peryshe of Chropthorne wryten by me the 14 day of auguste anno domini 1547 I being of the age 32</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Humfrey Harrison</td>
<td>1450-1500</td>
<td>f. 345v</td>
<td>Ego humfridus harrison capellanus sand?? / Condo teste mente? in hunc modo in primam leg... / Ego sum bonus puer quem Deus amat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS Rawlinson D.1222</td>
<td>1425–75</td>
<td>John Reyne</td>
<td>1624</td>
<td>f. 8v</td>
<td>By me John Reyne, his hand, 1624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Johannem Whytyng</td>
<td>1425-1475</td>
<td>f. 20v</td>
<td>Universis per presentes me Johannem Whyttyng</td>
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<tr>
<td>British Library, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional MS</td>
<td>1400–50</td>
<td>Symon Barsdall</td>
<td>1580-1620</td>
<td>f. 49v</td>
<td>Symon Barsdall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harley MS 1735</td>
<td>1450–85</td>
<td>John Crophill</td>
<td>1456-1485</td>
<td>f. 36v</td>
<td>be reson &amp; skyell per John Crophill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript</td>
<td>Approx. MS date</td>
<td>Reader</td>
<td>Approx. date of marks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harley MS 1735</td>
<td>1450–85</td>
<td>John Crophill</td>
<td>1456-1485</td>
<td>f. 37r</td>
<td>here þe men &amp; women þat I iohn crophill of wykys hath seen hare uryn &amp; doun curys unto hem and medsynys thoro þe grace of god &amp; houre lady &amp; þe holy gost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1472</td>
<td>f. 37v</td>
<td>In þe rene of king Edward xij yer meschelmes term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1478</td>
<td>f. 38r</td>
<td>In þe rene of king Edward xviiij yer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1480</td>
<td>f. 40v</td>
<td>In þe yer of hore lord ihesus scryst M CCCC iiij(xx)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1456</td>
<td>f. 46v</td>
<td>In þe rene of henry king þe vj xxxiiij yere þat I scet of on scent martyn day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1457</td>
<td>f. 46v</td>
<td>In þe rene of henry king xxxv yere on corpus krysty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1457</td>
<td>f. 47r</td>
<td>In þe rene of henry king þe vj xxxvj yere at scent meschel day</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1456-1485</td>
<td>f. 49r</td>
<td>by resoun &amp; skyell quod johanne crophill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1472</td>
<td>f. 50r</td>
<td>fore my lady dam alys davy in þe rene of king edward xij yere meschel term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harley MS 2320</td>
<td>1400–50</td>
<td>Maud Derrye?</td>
<td>1552</td>
<td>f.19v</td>
<td>Born the .5. of September in the Morn. 1552. Richard HaVell, Richard Hooper, Maud Derrye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harley MS 2340</td>
<td>1400–50</td>
<td>George Warnesfend</td>
<td>1500-1530</td>
<td>f. 1r</td>
<td>George Warnesfend owneth this booke.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Hawle?</td>
<td>1550-1570</td>
<td>f. 52r</td>
<td>The which was executed by me Richard Hawle for this I do make it for to use hankeswell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>or Hankeswell?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Angrishe</td>
<td>1540-1560</td>
<td>f. 56r</td>
<td>signature, Thomas Angrishe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Angrishe</td>
<td>1540-1560</td>
<td>f. 57r</td>
<td>signature, Thomas Angrishe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harley MS 5086</td>
<td>1470–1500</td>
<td>John Coket</td>
<td>1470-1500</td>
<td>f. 129r</td>
<td>William Coket filius Johannis Coket de Huxley in comitatus Cester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1500-1530</td>
<td>f. 1r</td>
<td>Peter Otteley parson of Wansted frome london sivene miles in Essex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript</td>
<td>Approx. MS date</td>
<td>Reader</td>
<td>Approx. date of marks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harley MS 5086</td>
<td>1470–1500</td>
<td>Rawfe Parker</td>
<td>1530-1550</td>
<td>f. 2v</td>
<td>Rawfe parker de fulham gent. and Ethelred uxor eis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal MS 17 A.xvi</td>
<td>1420</td>
<td>Andrew Jarvis</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 17r</td>
<td>And. Jarvis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Myles Lambregos</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 18r</td>
<td>Myles Lambregos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ales Thompson de Ely</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 21r</td>
<td>Ales Thomson de Ely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Sumter de Thesauro</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 24v</td>
<td>Joh. Sumter de Thesauro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Robert Howell</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 24v</td>
<td>Rob. Howell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Robert Barfot</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 25v</td>
<td>Rob. Barfot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Will Horble, alyter Cadderon</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 26v</td>
<td>Will Horble, alyter Cadderon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raff and Johan Jessen</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 31r</td>
<td>Raff and Johan Jessen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Bestoun</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 31r</td>
<td>Joh. Bestoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dan Thomas Rowland</td>
<td>1487-1494</td>
<td>f. 31r</td>
<td>dan Thomas Rowland, priour of þe monestory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 31v</td>
<td>money lent &quot;to Edward Redes wyeff&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal MS 17 A.xxxii</td>
<td>1425–75</td>
<td>John Rice</td>
<td>1500-1550</td>
<td>f. 2r</td>
<td>This is John Rice is boke, the which cost him xxv d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
<td>1530-1560</td>
<td>f. 45v</td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Dyngley/Dyneley</td>
<td>1560</td>
<td>f. 5r</td>
<td>Henry Dyneley / Anno nato xpo 1560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
<td>1530-1560</td>
<td>f. 76r</td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal MS 17 A.xxxii</td>
<td>1425–75</td>
<td>John Rice</td>
<td>1500-1530</td>
<td>f. 76v</td>
<td>This is John Rice is boke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
<td>1500-1550</td>
<td>f. 84v</td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Dyngley</td>
<td>1560</td>
<td>f. 89r</td>
<td>Henry Dyngley 1560</td>
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<td>Reader</td>
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<td>Folios</td>
<td>Transcription</td>
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<tr>
<td>Royal MS 17 A.xxxii</td>
<td>1425–75</td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
<td>1500-1550</td>
<td>f. 96v</td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
<td>1500-1550</td>
<td>f. 104v</td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
<td>1500-1550</td>
<td>f. 116v</td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Dyngley/Dyneley</td>
<td>1560</td>
<td>f. 119r</td>
<td>Yet thynke and thanke god fornow thys quod Henry dyneley anno nato xpo 1560 the xxij daye of february yn the seconde yere of owre soverayne lady qeene Elyzabethe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
<td>1500-1550</td>
<td>f. 131v</td>
<td>Thomas Wynter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal MS 17 C.xv</td>
<td>1425–1500</td>
<td>John Wynter</td>
<td>1470-1500</td>
<td>f. 117v</td>
<td>drawen off Latyn into Inglysch be me John Raynar [changed to Wyntyr] at the instans off my specyall louer and frende John Wyntyr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Wynter</td>
<td>1470-1500</td>
<td>f. 3-8</td>
<td>At bottom margin of each page is single word in this phrase: Iste liber constat Johanni Wynter cum gaudio et honore amen quod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Francis Rede</td>
<td>1550-1600</td>
<td>f. 9</td>
<td>per me Franciscum Rede juniorem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>1550-1600</td>
<td>f. 9</td>
<td>1585</td>
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<td>Royal MS 18 A.vi 1</td>
<td>1400–1500</td>
<td>John Lumley, 1st Baron Lumley</td>
<td>1560-1600</td>
<td>f. 1r</td>
<td>Lumley</td>
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<td>Sloane MS 140</td>
<td>1450–1550</td>
<td>John Hawghton</td>
<td>1450-1500</td>
<td>f. 5r</td>
<td>John Hawghton [four times]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloane MS 357</td>
<td>1400–50</td>
<td>Henry Haverpayd</td>
<td>1500-1550</td>
<td>f. 44v</td>
<td>Henry haverpayd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>1508</td>
<td>f. 61v, 63v</td>
<td>Memoranda of tithes of pigs and geese with various mens' names in Fawley, Hampshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>1563</td>
<td>f. 62r</td>
<td>For my aunte skyner tew die Novembri anno 1563 &amp; anno v(to) E regine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloane MS 357</td>
<td>1400–50</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>1563</td>
<td>f. 62r</td>
<td>Item for xii d. of Rubarbe / Atem for conserve of Rosemary flowers / Item for to fyll the glase of ?? a pynt with syroppe of lycorettes and syropp of vyolette &amp; syroppe of 9 soppe of eche of them 9 ownces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript</td>
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<td>Reader</td>
<td>Approx. date of marks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sloane MS 357</td>
<td>1400–50</td>
<td>Henricus? Summer</td>
<td>1450-1500</td>
<td>f. 64r</td>
<td>Iste liber pertinet ad Henricus? Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloane MS 372</td>
<td>1450–1500</td>
<td>John Tylston</td>
<td>1450-1500</td>
<td>f. 112r</td>
<td>Saryffe thy makar wythe love &amp; drede &amp; hevnys blysse shalle thy mede -- per me John Tylston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Chauntrell</td>
<td>1576</td>
<td>f. 112v</td>
<td>Per me Thomam Chantrellum, 1576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Robert Durham</td>
<td>1550-1600</td>
<td>f. 112v</td>
<td>Robert Durham</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Harry Pauncefoot</td>
<td>1550-1600</td>
<td>f. 113v</td>
<td>Harry Pauncefoot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sir Thomas Bradde</td>
<td>1450-1500</td>
<td>f. 7r</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Bradde[?]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sloane MS 540 A</td>
<td>1400–25</td>
<td>Ricardus (scribe)</td>
<td>1400-1425</td>
<td>f. 33v</td>
<td>Nomen scriptoris Ricardus plenus amoris / Qui scripsit sit benedictus amen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloane MS 686</td>
<td>1450–1500</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>1475-1500</td>
<td>f. 12r</td>
<td>God save my mester Jhon Peyton for euer &amp; euer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloane MS 1201</td>
<td>1475–1500</td>
<td>Thomas Fourmond</td>
<td>1480-1510</td>
<td>f. 1r</td>
<td>Thomas Fourmond, Thomas Fourmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Fourmond</td>
<td>1480-1510</td>
<td>f. 2r</td>
<td>Formand of P pr in kent, Thomas formande of carstaltum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Fourmond</td>
<td>1480-1510</td>
<td>f. 2v</td>
<td>Thomas fourmande of Carstaltum in the counte of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>William Wolontas</td>
<td>1480-1510</td>
<td>f. 2v</td>
<td>Wylliam Wolontas Babocke?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Babocke?</td>
<td>1480-1510</td>
<td>f. 2v</td>
<td>Rechard Clerke</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Rechard Clerke</td>
<td>1480-1510</td>
<td>f. 2v</td>
<td>Rechard Clerke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Johanne Baylond</td>
<td>1480-1510</td>
<td>f. 2v</td>
<td>To your h??ne proper persone Johanne Baylond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Barbon</td>
<td>1480-1510</td>
<td>f. 2v</td>
<td>Thomas Barbon</td>
</tr>
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<td>Sloane MS 1315 2</td>
<td>1470–1500</td>
<td>William Tetbury</td>
<td>1520-1550</td>
<td>f. 97v</td>
<td>Wylliam Tetbury</td>
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<td>Sloane MS 1764</td>
<td>1450–75</td>
<td>Thomas Say</td>
<td>1500-1520</td>
<td>f. 114v</td>
<td>Thomas Say</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Cantele</td>
<td>1463</td>
<td>f. 3r</td>
<td>Certificate of confession for two parishes (in Latin), 1463</td>
</tr>
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<td>Approx. MS date</td>
<td>Reader</td>
<td>Approx. date of marks</td>
<td>Folios</td>
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<td>Cambridge University Library, Cambridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS Additional 9308</td>
<td>1400–50</td>
<td>Thomas Hull</td>
<td>1450-1500</td>
<td>f. 1r</td>
<td>Thys ys thomas hulls boke of flebbyng [phlebotomy?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Hull</td>
<td>1450-1500</td>
<td>f. 4r</td>
<td>Stedfastly bounde unto Thomas b [hand shift] hull</td>
</tr>
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<td>MS Dd.10.44</td>
<td>1450–1500</td>
<td>William Thorowgood</td>
<td>1561</td>
<td>f. 102v</td>
<td>An thorowgood my fyurst dahter was born be 6 day of august the year that pauls stipil was a fyar anno 1561 bying weddensday be twin 9 or 10 of the clock at nyght in the our of venus &amp; in the syn of cansar god mak hir his servant a men -- quoth William Thorowgood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>William Parker</td>
<td>1470-1520</td>
<td>f. 149r</td>
<td>by me william parker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Francisco Slater</td>
<td>1520-1550</td>
<td>f. 149t</td>
<td>By me frannncis Slater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Young</td>
<td>1550-1570</td>
<td>f. 149v</td>
<td>By me Jhon yowng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>William Thorowgood</td>
<td>1560-1570</td>
<td>f. 149v</td>
<td>but I be line to William thorowgood only for to all to this he lent me continuation of above: &amp; nowe as supervisor to Thomas Faewyn his execetor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Faewyn</td>
<td>1570-1600?</td>
<td>f. 149v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Tyghte</td>
<td>1550-1570</td>
<td>f.149v</td>
<td>John Tyghte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS Dd.4.44</td>
<td>1400–1450</td>
<td>Thomas Heales?</td>
<td>1490-1520</td>
<td>f. 1r</td>
<td>Signature right margin, Thomas Heales?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Land</td>
<td>1550-1600</td>
<td>f. 1v</td>
<td>Signature in top margin, John Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Thomas Heales?</td>
<td>1550-1600</td>
<td>f. 6v</td>
<td>By me Thomas Heales?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anonymous or John Land?</td>
<td>1558-1603</td>
<td>f.18v</td>
<td>Elizabeth Regina anglie</td>
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<td>MS Dd.5.76 1</td>
<td>1422–461</td>
<td>John Nothryn</td>
<td>1422-1461</td>
<td>f. 27r</td>
<td>List of debts owed to or collected by John Nothryn</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS Dd.5.76 2</td>
<td>1450–1500</td>
<td>Johannes Fradder</td>
<td>1450-1500</td>
<td>f. 75v</td>
<td>Iste lybero constart Johannes Birtreth? quod Johannes Fradder</td>
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<td>MS Dd.6.29</td>
<td>1400–1450</td>
<td>Sir Wiliam Howheton</td>
<td>1480-1520</td>
<td>f. 16v</td>
<td>Recipe headed by &quot;Sir William Howheton&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Master Fyndryn</td>
<td>1480-1520</td>
<td>f. 16v</td>
<td>Recipe (mostly illegible) with the heading &quot;Master Fyndren&quot;</td>
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<td>MS Ec.1.13 1</td>
<td>1425–1475</td>
<td>Christopher Selyoke</td>
<td>1550-1580</td>
<td>f. 17r</td>
<td>Crestofer Selyoke owthe this boke you make hym a good manne est Amen</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 19r</td>
<td>Henry Hancocke of Stuble in the conty of darby woeth theys bockk god send hem Wyal to sped as for all</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 20r</td>
<td>As for my most harty comendment unto you prysang to god that yow by in good helt asi wass at the makyng hereof presed by all mygth god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 21r</td>
<td>mone? head done for these latest in ?? to Rychard gapson is me name and wyth my hande I</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1572</td>
<td>f. 38v</td>
<td>1572: the ?? moves hous in sundre plases to [?] beg and causethe owr man to be senes and wys</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 39v</td>
<td>William Haselam of honfeld? is my name and wyth my hand I wrot the same</td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 39v</td>
<td>(top) Henry Hancocke of Stuble</td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 40r</td>
<td>ferst of all after mette you most thank god of theys geyftes gret and low and pres your hevenly kyng and pres hem of heys dear blesseyng for ever and ever amen</td>
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<td>Robart Heponstall</td>
<td>1550-1600</td>
<td>f. 40v</td>
<td>Robart Heponstall</td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567–1580</td>
<td>f. 43v</td>
<td>Thes is to let your honor understand I as your good wysh toward?? at thes time? god be preysed of all thyngs? (illegible after)</td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567–1580</td>
<td>f. 47v</td>
<td>the father lord to the son haply was they tem? that thyss was be gon for he that ferst</td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567–1580</td>
<td>f. 48r</td>
<td>the father sed to the sone blessed be that tom that this whas be gone For he that ferst be goot the wey me say a deyd did he</td>
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<td>MS Ee.1.13 1</td>
<td>1425–75</td>
<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567–1580</td>
<td>f. 48v</td>
<td>the father sed to the sone blessed be the tom that this what be gone For he that ferst be goot the wey not saw a hapy deyd ded he</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1573</td>
<td>f. 49v</td>
<td>(Upside down at bottom of page) In the nam of god amen, In the name of god amen In the x? day of August in the yeare of owr lord 1573 I Thomas Cotlove to most</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1550-1600</td>
<td>f. 50r</td>
<td>(Upside down at bottom of page) Wylliam Stenrod of Dronfeld in the name of god amen I have my most harti commendacion to yow Mathay Masone of London in the name of god amen I have my most harti commendacion unto yew my son Wylliam Mason of Bradwey</td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567–1580</td>
<td>f. 61v</td>
<td>Henry Hancocke of stuble in the conty of Darby ?oes this book</td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567–1580</td>
<td>f. 62v</td>
<td>Omnibus […] Feidelibus […] per […] quod ego Wylyelmus Haselam de brownfeld in comitatus Darby Rydan? in villa predictum ??</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Margaret Hanco</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 62v</td>
<td>Margaret Hancok Mas[on?]</td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1577</td>
<td>f. 65v</td>
<td>Henry hancoke of stuble in the ixx? day of august in the ixx yere of the Ren of quen soveren</td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567–1580</td>
<td>f. 66v</td>
<td>henry han (and some other bits)</td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1572</td>
<td>f. 74v</td>
<td>In the name of god and in the x day of januari in the year of owr Lord 1572  I Robart Barkar of brampton in the conty of</td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1573</td>
<td>f. 75r</td>
<td>(top) This indayntur mad the first day of february in the xv year of the regne of our soverane lady quen Elyzabeth by the</td>
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<td>Henry Hancocke</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 75r</td>
<td>(bottom) Rychard Sheather of Sheffield is my name and with my hand I wrote the same In the name of god amen I Robart Wesding of toutle in the perishe of dronfeld in the conty of darby yeoman</td>
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</table>
Henry Hancocke 1567-1580 f. 80r  […] Lendes to this som belonging hem ys to be noted? that
I Robart Wesdo? of Totle in the parishe of dronfeld in the
conty of darby yomon of the town parte and Wylam Mason
of Stubble the sam parish of the other parte wher

Henry Hancocke 1573 f. 81v (top) In name of god amen in the xx day of august the yeare
of owr lord m d lxxiii I henry hancok of stuble seyll in led of
good &

William Haslam 1570-1575 f. 81v (bottom, upside down) hat leted and seted grawnted leted and
seted to the aforsed apsen ceest[er] on masse in southe gat
wyth

Possibly Christopher Selyoke? 1558 f. 82r (top) Thys indentur mad the ix day of march in the first yeare of
the reay

William Haselam 1570-1575 f. 82r (bottom) To my dearly beloved father and mother in law will
haslam of Dronfeld in the conty of Darby yeoman of the ton
party and Elizabeth apsen ceester of the other party
Wytnesseth that I therafter Wyllam hat leted and seted

Henry Hancocke 1567–1580 f. 92r Henry Hancoke of Stuble Mathew Barkar of totle

Henry Hancocke 1572 f. 94v 1572: Mi mester is sic at heys hart wisen hey wyll amend I
cannet tell verely bat god a mend hem sone if yowr Lord
amen hem hey wyll geff yow x li of good ?? lasells ?? of
England at the fest of natyvety of John Baptes nex in Jueng

William Haselam 1570-1575 f. 95r William Haselam est nomen meam in nomine patris et felye
& spiritus sanctus amen
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<th>Approx. date of marks</th>
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<td>MS Ee.1.13 1</td>
<td>1425–75</td>
<td>Robert Hancock</td>
<td>1571</td>
<td>f. 96v</td>
<td>Thes indentur made the xxv day of may in the xiii yere of the Ren of owr soverant lady Elyzabeth by the grase of god quen of England bytwen Robart Hancock of Stuble in the paryshe of drefeld in conty of Darby and Thomas Coutlaf of the same town and conty of the other party Wyntnes thee sed Robart Hancock hat De ???sed grawneted leted and ted? one parsle commonly called the son? archar to have and to forow? the fest of annunciation of our lady the v year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Hancock 1567-1580 f. 96v To my loveyg forynd Thames hancok of Stuble in the conty of Darby yeoman of the Thon party and Robart Hepon Stew of Dronfeld</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS Ee.1.13 2</td>
<td>1425–475</td>
<td>Henry Hancock</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 103v</td>
<td>henry hancoke pf stuble weeth this book…?</td>
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<td>Henry Hancock</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 104r</td>
<td>Henry Arttar the casse of my wrayteng un to you at this t? is to let you understand of and</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Henry Hancock</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 106v</td>
<td>I for my thanks it is sum</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Hancock</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 107r</td>
<td>Henry Hancock de Stuble in comitatus Darbs / henry hancock of Stuble in the conty of Darbey ??</td>
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<td>Henry Hancock</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 108v</td>
<td>Henry Hancock de Stuble</td>
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<td>Richard Slackes</td>
<td>1567-1580</td>
<td>f. 114v</td>
<td>Henry hancock of stuble in the parishe of dronfeld</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>f. 139r</td>
<td>Per me R. S. 1572 [doodle of face in profile] the name of god amen I Rychard Slackes beinge sike in bodye but whole</td>
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<td>MS Ee.1.15</td>
<td>1475–1525</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>1520</td>
<td>f. 115r</td>
<td>1520</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>1500–1520</td>
<td>f. 152v</td>
<td>Sir William howhetan [heading for a recipe]</td>
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<td>Robert Steele</td>
<td>1550–1580</td>
<td>f. 4r</td>
<td>Robert Steele</td>
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<td>MS Kk.6.33</td>
<td>1463</td>
<td>Dullingworth</td>
<td>1580–1620</td>
<td>f. 129v</td>
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<td>MS Hunter 117</td>
<td>1400–1425</td>
<td>Richard Nix</td>
<td>1470-1535</td>
<td>f. 107r</td>
<td>Ricardus nix possidet hunc librum medisine</td>
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<td>R. Jenkins</td>
<td>1550-1580</td>
<td>f. 112r</td>
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<td>Adame Stavanes</td>
<td>1550-1580</td>
<td>f. 112v</td>
<td>Adam Stavanes</td>
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<td>John Bowton</td>
<td>1550-1580</td>
<td>f. 112v</td>
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<td>Thomas Roberts</td>
<td>1550-1580</td>
<td>f. 112v</td>
<td>Thomas Roberts</td>
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<td>Richard Nix/Nykke (Bishop of Norwich)</td>
<td>1470-1535</td>
<td>f. 2v</td>
<td>Richardus nix possedet hunc librum medecine</td>
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<td>MS Hunter 509</td>
<td>1425–50</td>
<td>Robert Beverley</td>
<td>1450-1500</td>
<td>f. 169r</td>
<td>Item: Robert Beverley haþ wretten all þis bocke</td>
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<td>John Sperhawke</td>
<td>1450-1500</td>
<td>f. 171v</td>
<td>Liber magistri Johannis Sperhawk</td>
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<td>John Sperhawke</td>
<td>1450-1500</td>
<td>f. 171v</td>
<td>Sperhawk / Semper Secundum post obitum magistri thome westaw si superviuat; per ser? pigeram. id est. ryngworm secundum fratrem I. Stamford.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Robart Beverley</td>
<td>1450-1500</td>
<td>f. 171v</td>
<td>Amen quod Robart Beverley</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS Hunter 95</td>
<td>1400–50</td>
<td>William Lugger</td>
<td>1550-80</td>
<td>f. 198</td>
<td>To paie for this at the terme - 19s. 6d. I William Lugger which I gave punsted</td>
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<td><em>The Tollemache Book of Secrets</em></td>
<td>1475–1500</td>
<td>Catherine Tollemache</td>
<td>1580-1610</td>
<td>inside cover</td>
<td>Catheren Tollemache oweth this booke</td>
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<td>MS O.1.13 1</td>
<td>1430–70</td>
<td>Rychard Wytoner</td>
<td>1530-1560</td>
<td>f. 82v</td>
<td>Ryche Wyntoner? oweth this boke</td>
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<td>MS O.1.13 3</td>
<td>1450–1500</td>
<td>Anna Pole</td>
<td>1500-1550</td>
<td>f. 151v</td>
<td>Anna Pole</td>
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<td>MS 409</td>
<td>1450–75</td>
<td>John Stokys</td>
<td>1500-1550</td>
<td>f. 146r</td>
<td>I am John stokyes boke</td>
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<td>MS 409</td>
<td>1450–75</td>
<td>John Spencer</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>f. 86v</td>
<td>John Spencer</td>
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<td>MS 5262</td>
<td>1400–25</td>
<td>Henry Dyngley</td>
<td>1545-1560</td>
<td>f. 12r</td>
<td>Henry Dyngley</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Andrew Wylkynson</td>
<td>1550-1620</td>
<td>f. 34r</td>
<td>Who so ever on me doethe louke I am Andrewe wylkynsons bouk</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Andrew Wylkynson</td>
<td>1550-1620</td>
<td>f. 60r</td>
<td>Aperteyne unto Andrewe Wylkynson Surgeon</td>
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<td>MS Medical Society of London</td>
<td>1450</td>
<td>Roger Slegge/Glegge[?]</td>
<td>1540-1560</td>
<td>f. 97v</td>
<td>Under a recipe added in his hand &quot;For the ston in the bladder,&quot; is the signature Roger Slegge (possible Glegge)</td>
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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

**Manuscripts**

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Digital Facsimiles


Early Print

A little herball of the properties of herbes, newly amended & corrected, with certain additions at the ende of the boke, declaring what herbes hath influence of certain sterres and constellations, wherby maye be chosen the best and most lucky tymes and days of their ministracion, according to the moone being in the signes of heauen the which is daily appointed in the almanacke, made and gathered in the yeare of our Lorde God. M.D.L. the xii. daye of February, by Anthony Askham physycyon. Folger Shakespeare Library. STC 13175.19. London: John King, 1561.

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*Here begynneth a newe boke of medecynes intyttulyd or callyd the Treasure of pore men
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