



## **Transparently Hierarchical: Punctuation in the Townshend Family Recipe Book**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The three scribes of a mid-seventeenth-century collection of medical recipes resemble each other in how they have punctuated the recipes, although they did not work simultaneously. They draw on similar repertoires of marks and they mark similar functions, but they do not use the same marks for the same functions. The principal function is the global one of indicating where the constitutive elements of the recipes begin and end. This function of indicating a text's structural hierarchy goes back centuries and can seem old-fashioned for an Early Modern English manuscript produced when grammarians had started to discuss whether punctuation should mark syntactic units. A key observation is that recipes stand out among text-types by having a fixed, transparently hierarchical structure. This feature of them facilitates the researcher's appreciation of how the punctuation functions and dismisses any impression of the scribes having deployed the marks haphazardly.

**KEYWORDS:** Punctuation; Standardisation; Early Modern English; Text-type; Medical recipe; Manuscript.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Standardisation of Early Modern English is the theme of the present issue of the journal. This paper accordingly asks to what extent the punctuation found in an early Early Modern English manuscript can be considered standardised. The manuscript, London, Wellcome Library, MS 774, also known as the Townshend Family Recipe Book, is a plain one without any decoration.

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It comprises a table of contents followed by a series of medical and culinary recipes, which represent a highly structured text-type. The manuscript dates from the mid-seventeenth century and was written by three scribes who did not work simultaneously and who left several intermittent folios blank. The manuscript's present length is 1 flyleaf + 99 folios + 1 flyleaf but it must originally have contained more folios, since various stubs survive.<sup>1</sup> While the manuscript has definitely lost leaves, the table of contents is the only textual item which ends abruptly. It is followed by a stub. The last recipe indexed by the table of contents gives fol. 61 as where to find it, but the recipe in question, a recipe for a preparation to improve one's digestion, is today found on fols. 38r-38v, which is halfway through the second of two series of consecutive folios exclusively in the hand of Scribe A. There is good evidence for the production date, for Scribe A dated the table of contents 1636 on fol. 1r, while Scribe B wrote the year 1647 on fol. 82v. The gap between these two years is not the only piece of evidence for the respective scribes' stints having been produced at separate times. Another piece is that the table of contents does not index any recipe copied by Scribes B or C, including recipes written on folios found between those containing Scribe A's first and second stints. There never is any change of scribe within a recipe.

The scholarly literature on historical punctuation centres on establishing how it functions (Arn, 1994; Calle-Martín & Miranda-García, 2005; Parkes, 1999). Did writers and scribes deploy marks sporadically or did they supply them according to a system? If there was a system, is it perhaps one not entirely transparent to a present-day reader? Do the marks, if any, indicate prosodic or syntactic divisions of a text? What functions did Early Modern English grammarians promote for each mark? It is standard for editors to insert present-day punctuation into their editions: what are the consequences of this practice for the reader's encounter with the contents? Did the introduction of silent reading increase the need for punctuation to guide the reader? Much of the literature addressing questions such as these is limited in that it discusses the punctuation marks furnished in an individual text, work or text-type –the present paper does too. A significant exception is Parkes (1992), since this publication presents a survey of a wide range of manuscripts written in Latin in the West and has a chronological span of more than a millennium. However, this survey openly relied on convenience sampling, and its findings may or may not successfully generalise with respect to language, chronology, geography or text-type for this reason.

Notwithstanding this reservation, Parkes's survey is an authoritative and pioneering one which operated with a definition of punctuation rooted in its principal function as an aid to a particular reading of a text. This definition clearly extended beyond punctuation, in the narrow sense of punctuation marks proper, to layout (*mise-en-page*). He frequently described how *litterae notabiliores*, line breaks, blank lines and indentation integrate with commas and periods to indicate the beginning or end of units such as *sententiae*, for example, in a Latin text copied at the Benedictine monastery in Corbie in the ninth century (Parkes, 1994b: 266; cf. Hanks &

Fish, 1997: 274). Punctuation marks proper might, at least theoretically, have been added to text already copied; this is self-evidently not the case with layout. Moreover, Parkes (1994a: 35; 1994b: 265) stressed in several publications as a fundamental principle how punctuation marks in both the narrow and the extended senses do not have absolute values but must always be interpreted in the context of other marks found in the same text.

Parkes (1999: 339) recognised three functions in prose, which tend to overlap. All three aid reading and promote a particular interpretation: (1) by separating *sententiae*, meaning arguments and counter-arguments in structured discourse such as treatises, irrespective of how lengthy and syntactically complex each *sententia* might be; (2) by emphasising certain elements, including emphasis for the purpose of disambiguation; and (3) by alerting a reader to a text's formal organisation, its structural hierarchies. This paper refers to punctuation serving any of these three functions as *discourse-based* punctuation. Other terms encountered in the literature are *prosodic*, *rhetorical* and *elocutionary*, which are not entirely synonymous. The term *elocutionary* in particular seems an almost misleading term, for while it is true that texts were read aloud by default until late into the Middle Ages and Parkes (1999, 339) does recognise instructions for voice modulation as an additional possible function, his classification nonetheless prioritises the signalling of units of sense.

In what follows, I refer to the marks by their modern labels where one is available. I delve a little deeper into the historical division into discourse-based punctuation versus syntactic punctuation, and I describe what punctuation is present in the Townshend Family Recipe Book. I establish, separately for each of the three scribes, what marks they have deployed and what functions the marks serve. I then highlight differences and similarities between the scribes in terms of the marks and their functions. My concluding discussion draws attention to the historical roots for these scribes' punctuation, relates their punctuation practices to the ongoing debate among Early Modern English grammarians about how to punctuate, and discusses the question of the extent to which the scribes' practices can be considered standardised. The Book does not contain noteworthy evidence of standardisation if the expectation of standardised punctuation is that its scribes should consistently have used the same marks for the same functions. It is, however, not haphazard or sporadic either, for the scribes have consistently furnished the text with punctuation, not least in the extended sense. This punctuation supports the sociocultural function of recipes as a text-type and has a long history. It is of Parkes's second and third kinds and either disambiguates or indicates a discourse-based hierarchy, thus aiding a private reader in parsing the text. Where their separate practices have little in common is in the mapping between mark and function.

## 2. DISCOURSE-BASED PUNCTUATION AND SYNTACTIC PUNCTUATION

Aristophanes of Byzantium (third century BC) is often credited with having introduced pointing devices –punctuation– to promote a particular interpretation of a text. He divided text up into the units *periodi*, *kola* and *kommata*, which he advocated should be concluded by means of, respectively, a raised dot, a lowered dot and a mid-level dot. These units of text are progressively smaller and may be nested inside each other such that a *periodus* may comprise several *kola*, and a *kolon* may in turn embed several *kommata*. I render these units *kolon* (singular) / *kola* (plural) and *komma* (singular) / *kommata* (plural) with <k> and in italics in this paper to avoid any possible confusion with the punctuation marks *colon* and *comma*; this normalisation practice includes citations, regardless of what spelling and typesetting are found in their source. The practice of italicising extends also to the unit *periodus* (plural: *periodi*) lest it be confused with the punctuation mark *period*. Aristophanes’s dots, known as *théseis* in Greek, outlived him. Aelius Donatus (fourth century AD), St Jerome (fourth/fifth century AD) and Isidore of Seville (seventh century AD) all recommended their use, now under the Latin names *distinctiones* or *positurae*.

However, a tension is in evidence already in these early sources with respect to the basis for dividing text up. The division is ultimately rooted in physiology for Aristophanes. The *periodus* indicates a pause for breath when text is read aloud, as text would have been by default in his days, and it marks the end of a different type of unit –the *sententia*– which encompasses up to as much text as can be read aloud in a single breath. The *kola* and *komma* trigger successively shorter pauses for breath. By contrast, the division is based on semantics for Isidore. The *periodus* concludes a complete idea, the *kolon* an idea to which something may still be added, and the *komma* a part of an idea.

The system of varying the length of pauses was still in use a millennium later, in the Renaissance, where the schoolmaster Richard Mulcaster wrote in his *The First Part of the Elementarie* that punctuation “helps to our breathing, & the distinct vtterance of our speche” (1582: 149). The continuity from the early sources, including the tension, is even clearer in the writer George Puttenham’s *The Arte of English Poesie*. He wrote:

[...] the auncient reformers of language, inuented three maner of pauses, one of lesse leasure then another, and such seuerall intermissions of sound to serue (besides easment to the breath) for a treble distinction of sentences or parts of speach, as they happened to be more or lesse perfect in sence. The shortest pause or intermission they called *komma*, as who would say a peece of a speach cut of. The second they called *kolon*, not a peece but as it were a member for his larger length, because it occupied twice as much time as the *komma*. The third they called *periodus*, for a complement or full pause, and as a resting place and perfection of so much former speach as had bene vttered, and from whence they needed not to passe any further, vnles it were to renew more matter to enlarge the tale (1589: 87–88).

What was behind the labels “sentences or parts of speach” for Puttenham were units which “happened to be more or lesse perfect in sence”. In other words, despite the present-day associations of these labels with syntax, the principles guiding the division do not exclusively relate to syntax but to what I describe as the discourse level in this paper for want of an accurate term. What constitutes a single unit is a stretch of text characterised by unity irrespective of its length or syntactic properties. Such a unit may, however, accidentally coincide with a syntactic constituent such as a sentence or phrase. This is especially true of the *komma*, it being the shortest unit.<sup>2</sup>

The formal properties of the marks changed between ancient Greece and Renaissance England. The transition which took place in Anglo-Saxon times from majuscule to minuscule script also saw scribes abandoning the system of varying the vertical placement of a single dot. They most probably did so because the use of minuscule script and most particularly cursive minuscule script made the vertical placement of a dot ambiguous and non-distinctive. Instead, scribes varied the number of dots, to indicate a *periodus* by means of three dots, a *kolon* by means of two and a *komma* by means of one. The dots constituting a single mark were placed roughly equidistantly from each other along the vertical dimension. They could be coincident along the horizontal dimension or displaced along it for the three-dot mark to describe the corners of a triangle –Scribe A of the Townshend Family Recipe Book closes his *periodi* with such a triangular mark, although he was active many centuries later. A further development was the addition of a finishing stroke to a dot, which brought about the distinction between what today are period and comma, and between what today are colon and semicolon in terms of the repertoire of marks. Three of these four marks are also used in the Book, which evidently draws on a long and established tradition.

“Medieval writers and their scribes [...] had no syntactic punctuation” (Hanks & Fish, 1997: 274). In fact, syntactic punctuation is in essence a post-medieval phenomenon of recommissioning marks already in use. Early Modern English grammarians discussed whether to continue with discourse-based punctuation or whether clarification of syntax ought instead to be the main purpose of punctuation. The latter was what the Italian printer Aldus Manutius the Younger had declared it to be at the beginning of the Renaissance. He did so in the augmented version of his treatise *Orthographiae Ratio* (1566), which he composed when he was still a teenager. But the development of syntax-based punctuation was no doubt facilitated by discourse-based boundaries accidentally coinciding with syntactic ones, and the development can probably be seen as a consequence of the late-medieval emergence of silent reading practices since they rendered it less necessary to instruct on when to pause for breath. As Salmon summed it up, the Early Modern period is when “punctuation ceases to be regarded primarily as a guide to the spoken language, and becomes an aid to clarity in the printed word” (1999: 40).

It may also be the case that higher literacy rates increased the need for texts to be furnished with visual cues so as to ease readers' processing of them. Visual cues would also promote readers' ability quickly to locate and retrieve information by scanning texts rather than perusing them for their edification (Mackay [2012], as summarised in Smith [2017: 71]). The latter concern was of course not new, for it had been a driving force behind medieval developments in layout and decoration, and it has little to do with instructions for voice modulation. There may, in addition, have been an interaction with developments in script, for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Secretary *currens* must objectively have been more difficult for a contemporary reader to scan than its medieval predecessors, in my assessment in any case. If a need to provide visual cues was a salient variable, it may explain the absence of punctuation marks proper from Scribe B's contribution to the Townshend Family Recipe Book, for Scribe B's letters are so easily legible as to render any marks unnecessary: the lettering is large and upright and has few cursive features.

Present-day English punctuation operates on syntactic principles such that sentences close with a period, and a comma separates coordinated finite clauses. However, while punctuation marks proper no longer indicate discourse-based units, such units have not lost their relevance, and punctuation in the extended sense does still signal both their boundaries and those of certain syntactic units. A paragraph, for example, will be identifiable through indentation and/or blank space, and unity will ideally characterise its contents, while sentences open with a capital letter.

### 3. PUNCTUATION IN THE BOOK

Scribe A of the Townshend Family Recipe Book writes two stints: (1) A table of contents on fols. 1–4, which ends defectively at the bottom of a verso, and (2) a series of recipes on fols. 8–50. This scribe, whose hand is the most cursive of the three, operates with a discourse-based hierarchy with two levels: *periodi* and *kola*. A recipe for China broth, attributed to a Dr Butler in its title, provides an illustrative example. Its preparation falls into two separate phases: a first one where you blend a first batch of ingredients and boil them for a period, and a second one where you add a second batch of ingredients. It is these two phases that are *kola*, and Scribe A uses a comma to separate them (the two *periodi* are, respectively, the title and the body of the recipe). The recipe occurs on fol. 14v and is reproduced below as example (1).

(1) Take an *ounce* and a half of China þynne  
sliced steepe it 12 houers in five pintes of  
faire water in an earthen pott þen boyle it  
addinge a Cocke Chickin and half a handfull  
of French Barley boyle þe same vntill half  
bee Consumed , þen put in Succory Rootes a

handfull of Sparagus Rootes and  
 parsley of each a handfull six dates Cutt  
 in smale peeces Ivory hartes horne of  
 each tyed in a Cloath half a handfull [...]³

Consider two further examples, both considerably truncated so as to save space. First, a comma on fol. 32r falls at a significant juncture in the preparation of “An other service for ye table” (example 2) and divides the material on either side into separate *kola*. Each *kolon* describes a separate phase in the preparation of the dish, like in example (1), for what comes before the comma describes how you mix the ingredients and eventually put them in the oven, whereas what comes after the comma addresses how you serve up the dish when it has cooked. Second, a comma on fol. 43r similarly separates the preparation of a remedy from its application. The remedy is “A posset drinke to ease ye scaldinge of ye vrine” (example 3), and what precedes the comma is some 50 words long in the non-truncated version. This comma additionally has the deictic function of emphasising the verb *drink*, and it has a syntactic function as a separator of the subordinate clause “when you goe to bedd” from the matrix clause; the comma in example (2) similarly falls a clausal boundary. The deictic function seems deliberate, since the intention is for the patient to imbibe the remedy and since other verbs are not similarly marked. By contrast, the syntactic function seems coincidental, because many other subordinate clauses are not similarly marked.

(2) Take a quantity of wilde Curdes made of þe whay of  
 new milke Cheese draine þe whay from þem as Cleane  
 as yow Can in a Cullender þen take [...] add further ingredients and ...]  
 set þem into *your* oven a little before  
 yow draw *your* pyes , þen take þem out [...] and soe serve þem vpp

(3) Take of March Malloe Rootes well washed and  
 [mix the ingredients to prepare the drink...]  
 and when you goe to bedd , drinke a good draught  
 þereof warme [...]

Scribe A marks the end of a *periodus* by means of three dots followed by a virgule. The three dots make the corners of a triangle, and this triangle-plus-virgule mark may repeat when space permits, in which case a short horizontal line typically separates instances of it. The scribe employs the mark only from fol. 45r on, and what constitutes a *periodus* is either the title of a recipe or its body.

The medical recipe as a text-type strongly tends to be structured in accordance with a template. They prototypically open with a statement of purpose or title along the lines of “An ointment to treat an itchy rash”, which identifies both a type of preparation and an ailment.

They then proceed first to list ingredients and next to describe how to prepare the given preparation from those ingredients and apply it, before closing with a statement of its efficacy against the particular ailment identified in the statement of purpose. Mäkinen (2006: 83–94) is one among several scholars who have discussed variations on this basic template and the ordering of the elements. This paper contributes to that discussion in that the scribes of the Townshend Family Recipe Book use punctuation to delimit the elements, which suggests that they were conscious of the template.

In addition to the two-level hierarchy, Scribe A employs the period to surround parenthetical material, by which I mean material semantically peripheral to or somehow qualifying the main line of thought. Examples are very infrequent but fol. 42v contains one (example 4). There, an interpolated excursus interrupts a description of how and when to administer a particular remedy. The excursus describes how the dosage may be doubled in a particular case, namely if the patient is weak.

(4) The vse of þe Iaundice water and yee time

This water must bee given to þe patient in ye  
morninge fastinge 2 howers before eatinge and  
drinkinge and not to sleepe tell 2 howers  
after

It must bee taken as followeþ 3 sponefull  
of þe water and 3 sponefull of 6 *shilling* beere  
[fol. 42v]

The strongest water will beare 4 sponefulles  
of beere . If þe patient bee weake it may bee  
taken twice a day soe it bee 2 howers before  
eatinge and drinkinge . The patient must  
vse exercise of body w<sup>i</sup>þin a quarter of an hower  
afterwardes especially þe exercise of þe Armes  
eyther by sawinge or hewinge of woode or  
by liftinge a stoole ouer his head or such like  
and a little exercise before it bee taken  
will doe good allsoe

Scribe A may insert a comma to disambiguate a series of words which starts in such a way that a reader is likely to parse the series incorrectly on their first pass. Psycholinguists label such series *garden paths*. A well-known example is the sentence *the old man the boat*, where a reader will probably interpret the word *man* as a noun-phrase head on the first pass and only later realise that the word is intended to function as a verb. What justifies the qualification *may* is that Scribe A appears to disambiguate possible garden paths inconsistently, many similar contexts being unmarked. Fol. 28r provides an example of this inconsistency



(example 5). The comma clarifies that one is not to add a “sponefull Maydenheare”, but there is no comma in the next lines to clarify that large mace is not measured in handfulls or liquorice in blades.

(5) Take french Barley Channged 3 or 4 *quatuor* sponefulles a  
 Fennell and Parseley Roote or two picked and  
 sliced Raysons of þe sonne stoned and Currantes of  
 eyther a quarter of a pound figges and dates of eyther  
 6 or 8 Anniseedes and sweete Fennell seedes bruised  
 of eyther a sponefull , Maydenheare Scabious  
 dried Hisopp of each a handfull Large Mace  
 a blade or two Liquorice a sticke bruised or  
 sliced þe weight of 8 pennce let all þese  
 bee boyled in an earthen pipkin [...]

This scribe’s capitalisation practice supports the punctuation marks proper, since *periodi* and *kola* always open with a capital letter, just like *periodi* are always preceded by a line break and when they are titles, they are centred. He does, however, use capitalisation for other functions too; witness the many capitalised nouns in example (5).

Turning away from Scribe A, the hand of Scribe B is “of an illiterate type” according to the Wellcome Library online catalogue, whereas those of Scribes A and C are both “formal”.<sup>4</sup> It appears in two stints: (1) on fols. 6v and 7v between the defective table of contents and the first recipe, both of which are in the hand of Scribe A, as has been mentioned above; and (2) on fols. 51r-97v. This scribal hand alternates with that of Scribe C in the second stint, with the two scribes appearing together on fols. 52, 62, 63, 65 and 67. The distribution is such as to suggest that Scribe B joined the project after Scribe C had completed his work, for Scribe B has supplied text in blank spaces available between recipes written out in the hand of Scribe C, often on the bottom half of a folio.

Scribe B has not used any punctuation mark proper but the layout that he has imposed sets up a two-level discourse-based hierarchy. The recipe for Christie’s balsam (fol. 74r) illustrates this scribe’s reliance on layout as punctuation (example 6). It is divided into two *periodi*: first, the title, which is centred and opens with a capital letter; second, the body of the recipe, which follows a line break and opens with a capital letter. The second *periodus* itself consists of two *kola*: first, the list of ingredients and the description of how to prepare the balsam from them; second, the description of how to apply the balsam. The second *kolon* follows a line break and its first line is indented but it does not open with a capital letter.<sup>5</sup> Scribe B’s practice is not entirely consistent, as not every recipe is so divided up.

(6) Balsanum christie  
 Take oyle of oliue one pint canarye  
 wine 2 parts boyle them together  
 in an earthen pott till the wine  
 be consumed an that you may know  
 by casting a lettle in the fire an if  
 it make noe noise which oyle vsually  
 doth it is enough  
     this Balsaum healeth all kind of  
 wounds laying linte dipped in it  
 vpon it

Scribe C is solely responsible for fols. 52v–62r, 67v–71v, 98r and 99r. The latter two folios are separated by a blank folio (98v) and the text they carry is in Latin, unlike any other text in this scribe’s hand. In addition, Scribes B and C alternate on fols. 62v–67r, with the distribution of recipes in their respective hands on these folios suggesting that Scribe B worked after Scribe C had already completed his work, as has been mentioned. Scribe C is the most copious punctuator of the three scribes who contributed to the Townshend Family Recipe Book, and where Scribes A’s and B’s discourse-based hierarchy has two levels, Scribe C’s has three. Example (7) below reproduces a recipe in its entirety to illustrate how this scribe punctuates the English text and what functions the marks have. The recipe occurs on fol. 52v and describes how to prepare and administer a remedy for colic of the adult kind caused by kidney stone or gallstone.

(7) A soveraigne drinke for to ease [MS: east] the  
 Callicke and to breake the Stone - -  
 whereby to avoide it in the Vrin ./  
 Take Sage Rosemary Camomill Pelitory of the  
 wall , tyme Lavender , wilde= tyme, damaske , or  
 Red= rose leaues , Elderflowers Saxifrage , the greene  
 weede of oysters of eache of theise a good handfull  
 Nutmegges Ginger Cinamonn , Cloues Annyseedes  
 Fennell seedes , Carraway seedes , of each a quarter  
 of an ounce , then bruise them all and lay all theise  
 Compoundes in steepe in a Gallon of the best Claret  
 wyne that you can gett 24 howers being very  
 close Covered , then still them in a Limbeck or in  
 a still , but the Limbeck is better ; This water  
 being thus distilled is to be taken by the Patient  
 in this manner *videlicet* for twee dayes together  
 take thereof iij spoonefulles of the weakest of it

at a fyne morneing *and* eveninge first *and* last  
 then to stay one day from takeing any , then take  
 for three dayes twoe spoonefulles of the weakest  
 thereof at a tyme morneing *and* eveninge  
 first *and* last , and soe take not more for by godes helpe  
 this will ease the Collick and Cure the stone  
 whereby it shall breake *and* avoide in the vrine  
 This drinke will alsoe Comforte the stomack virgul  
 kill the wormes in the bodie , stay the Euninge  
 of the Reynes as alsoe stay the rageinge of the  
 tooth ache takeing of it a spoonefull euery morning  
 for 4 or 5 daies togeather ./

Scribe C's mark for the end of a *periodus* is a full stop followed by a virgule or, occasionally, just a virgule without the full stop. Example (7) contains two instances of a full stop followed by a virgule: one occurs after the title of the recipe, the other after its body. Both these *periodi* open with a capital letter and when the *periodus* is a title, it is centred. This scribe uses the semicolon to subdivide *periodi* into *kola*, almost always in combination with a capitalised first letter of the first word of each *kolon*. The single instance of this mark found in example (7) separates the description of how to prepare the remedy from the description of how and when a patient should take it and in what dosage in order to alleviate the symptoms – Scribe A also treated the preparation and application phases as separate *kola*. It is possible that Scribe C conceived of the final *kolon* as itself being amenable to subdivision into *kommata*, as would be logical if, as this paper suggests, the scribe consciously followed a template. Although he has not added any punctuation mark proper to indicate any subdivision of the *kolon*, such a conception of it would explain why he has capitalised the first letter of a demonstrative determiner, for the remainder of the *kolon* after “This drinke will alsoe [...]” enumerates *additional* illnesses against which the remedy is also effective, whereas the part of it that comes before the determiner relates specifically to colic. The two are, so to speak, separate sense-units, separate structural elements.

Like Scribe A, Scribe C inserts a comma between coordinate items in a list in order to aid the reader and prevent them from venturing down a possible garden path. Example (8) below, from a recipe for chicken soup or broth on fol. 54r, illustrates this use of the comma to disambiguate, for the commas clarify which ingredients should be mixed and in which amount. The element order is ‘amount + ingredient’. Without the punctuation, it would have been possible on a first pass to read each element in the list as coming in the order ‘ingredient + amount’, which is the order followed elsewhere in the manuscript –indeed, the recipe on fol. 53r, also in Scribe C's hand, for a remedy for flatulence has “prepared Annyseedes three ounces , of Fennellseedes one ounce *and* a halfe , of prepared Colianderseedes one ounce”. It

will be recalled that example (5) above, which was in Scribe A's hand, also used the order 'ingredient + amount'.

(8) Take a Runninge Cock [...] put him into such a still as you still Rose-water in with a pottle of sack , a pound of Currantes , a pound of Reysons of the sun stoned , a quarter of a pound of Dates stoned and cut smale , 2 handfulls of pimpernell , a handfull of Rosemary a handfull of wylde tyme , 2 handfulls of penniriall burrage and buglosse of each a handfull , a pottle of newe milke from a Redd Cowe , [...]

Scribe C sometimes surrounds parenthetical material with a comma, where it will be recalled that Scribe A used a full stop for this function. An example is the comment, on fol. 60r, about how occasional folding will cause orange peel to keep its colour (example 9). The comment is parenthetical because it interrupts what is otherwise discourse marked by unity and coherence: a list of consecutive steps specifying how to prepare marmalade.

(9) Take *your* Orrenge , pare them as thinn as you can , cut them in halues and take out the meate , but leaue the skins that hold in the meate , then scoure them in - salt and lay them foure or fiue howers in water and having twoe skillettes of [fol. 60r] water on the fire , boile them , shifteing them before they haue beene too longe in , they will the better keepe freshe colloured , when they be tender lay them on a cloth to soke out the water , and whilest they be warme take out the skinns cleane and cut them in smale slices , and shred them , and put them in a skillett [...]

Examples (7) and (9) both illustrate yet another function of the comma. Every *kolon* found in these two examples subsumes a series of steps in a progression. It is these steps which are each surrounded by commas and so the comma's function is to subdivide *kola*. Because of the stepwise progression, the steps –*kommata*– tend to open with either a verb in the imperative ("Take *your* Orrenge , pare them [...] , cut them") or a connective (" , then bruise them all

[...] , then still them in a Limbec”), which has as a consequence that several of them coincide with a clausal boundary.

The above description of what marks occur in the Book accounts for a large proportion of them but it is not fully exhaustive.<sup>6</sup> For instance, Scribe A’s practice when a line break interrupts an orthographic word is to draw two short parallel horizontal lines at the beginning of the second line to tie the two parts of the discontinuous word together. An example involving a compound noun is found on fol. 33r: “goose | =berryes”, where I have added a vertical line to the transcription to mark the place where the line breaks. Scribe C adopts a very similar practice to Scribe A in this regard. The precursors of the question mark, exclamation mark and parentheses are not present in the Book, nor is the colon, although they were all in use in the Renaissance.

#### 4. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Modern scholars interested in the process that has ultimately resulted in the present-day standard for English have not accorded punctuation nearly as much attention as such other levels of language as phonology, lexis and orthography judging by the number of publications devoted to the respective levels. One example will have to suffice to illustrate this tendency. Scholars have often brought up *Logonomia Anglica* (1619), the grammatical treatise written by the elder Alexander Gil, for its recognising the existence of a socially-conditioned prestige variety with respect to pronunciation, rather than for its views on when and how to deploy punctuation. The treatise called this variety the *Communis dialectus* or General Dialect and associated it with the upper ranks. The existence of the variety suggests that standardisation in the sense of supralocalisation (regional dialect levelling) was well on the way in Gil’s days, although his treatise acknowledged that the variety admitted of some variation. George Puttenham had a similar association in the previous century. He explicitly linked what he considered desirable target usage not only to the upper end of the social scale like Gil did, but also to a specific geographical location: the general London area.

But the lack of scholarly attention does not mean that Early Modern grammarians occupied themselves with punctuation any less than they did with other levels of language. One of them, Richard Mulcaster, already mentioned, described as many as thirteen punctuation marks in his treatise the *Elementarie* (1582). Every one of these marks serves as a guide to voice modulation, but eight of them affect the single word. For example, the mark which Mulcaster labelled the “long time” is a line placed above a monophthong or diphthong to indicate that it is to be pronounced long, whereas the “shorte time” is “an half circle opening vpward” placed above a vowel or consonant to indicate that it is to be pronounced short (1582: 149). The remaining five marks are deployed between units larger than the single word, and both the nomenclature and the description of their respective functions are strongly reminiscent

of the discourse-based tradition of Isidore of Seville, St Jerome, Donatus and ultimately Theophanes. They are “Comma, Colon, Period, Parenthesis, [and] Interogation” (1582: 149), and the function of the comma is “to help our brethe a litle”, whereas that of the period is to do so “at full”. Mulcaster was a master at St Paul’s School, London, and his treatise, which atypically for its time is written in English rather than Latin, is explicitly a teaching manual; indeed, the punctuation marks are “distinctions to pronoun[c]e by, & therefor, as theie ar to be set down with iudgement in writing, so theie ar to be vsed with diligence in the right framing of the tender childes mouth” (1582: 150). Gil taught at the very same school (where he famously had the future poet John Milton as a pupil), and their treatises contributed to codification of the language through their being set school texts.

It is clear from Rodríguez-Álvarez’s (2010) survey of twenty-six Early Modern grammarians’ treatises,<sup>7</sup> specifically those written by schoolmasters for school use, that they are converging on a repertoire of punctuation marks proper consisting of those five of Mulcaster’s marks which come between words plus semicolon and “admiration” mark (exclamation mark). To the extent that the treatises mention other marks at all, they are of the type affecting single words (Rodríguez-Álvarez, 2010; cf. Medina Sánchez, 2015). This convergence also characterises the handful of these treatises which, like those of Mulcaster and Gil, predate the Townshend Family Recipe Book. A search of the treatises, dictionaries and like works indexed by the *Lexicons of Early Modern English* database (Lancashire, 2018) for terms like *colon* and *period* shows that grammarians continued to define the marks as indicating pauses for breath throughout the Early Modern period.

However, the search also reveals their definitions *simultaneously* to refer to syntax (cf. Rodríguez-Álvarez, 2010). Where Puttenham’s definition of the sentence might possibly have excluded syntax (see above), Mulcaster’s certainly refers to both breathing and syntax, for the very passage in which his *Elementarie* defines a period as a longer pause for breath also explains that the mark “in writing followeth a perfit sentence” (1582: 149) and it offers a well-formed declarative sentence as an example of its use. The adjective *perfect* recurs in the definitions given in other works: Robert Cawdrey (1604: n.p.), s.v. *period*: “the end of a perfect sentence”; John Bullokar (1616: n.p.), s.v. *period*: “The perfect end of a sentence, marked commonly with a full point thus (.)”; etc. The repeat occurrence of this adjective shows that these grammarians operated with a syntactic notion of a sentence, all the more so since the comma, colon and semicolon are defined and sometimes exemplified relative to it: Mulcaster’s comma “followeth som small branch of the sentence” (1582: 149), Bullokar’s colon is “A marke of a sentence not fully ended” (1616: n.p.), and the semicolon is “half a Colon or a point in writing or printing made thus [ ; ] in the middle of a sentence” according to Thomas Blount’s *Glossographia* (1656: n.p.). So, the repertoire of marks stabilised during the Early Modern period and a syntactic notion of the function of punctuation is in evidence alongside the

discourse-based one already by the mid-seventeenth century, which is the Book's date of production.

The punctuation found in the Townshend Family Recipe Book does not, however, attest the syntactic type, except by coincidence. The Book does not look forward in time in this respect. All three scribes converge on the functions which they indicate by means of punctuation in the extended sense of both marks proper and layout. These functions are either to disambiguate a local context (Scribes A and C) or to indicate a global discourse-based hierarchy (Scribes A, B and C), including to identify information as being parenthetical. To serve the latter function, all three of the Book's scribes turn to line-breaks, indentation, centring and capitalisation of the first letter of the first word, while two of them do so in combination with punctuation marks proper: period (Scribes A and C), comma (Scribes A and C), semicolon (Scribe C), triangle-plus-virgule (Scribe A) and period-plus-virgule (Scribe C). None of the three scribes uses layout to disambiguate a local context, but two of the scribes employ the proper marks period (Scribes A and C) and comma (Scribes A and C) to do so.

Moreover, in addition to their sometimes not punctuating at all in the narrow sense, such as when Scribe A deploys his triangle-plus-virgule mark only from fol. 45r on, the Book's scribes do not punctuate identically in terms of the mapping between mark and function.<sup>8</sup> Consider, as an indicative summary, their ways of indicating a *kolon* boundary. Scribe A inserts a comma at such a boundary but does not capitalise the first letter of the first word. Scribe B, by contrast, inserts a line break and indents but capitalises the first letter of the first word only if what begins is both a *periodus* and a *kolon*. Scribe C does not insert a line break but does both insert a semicolon and capitalise the first letter of the first word. Parkes observed that punctuation marks in both the narrow and extended senses do not have absolute values and must always be interpreted relative to other marks found in the same text. It is clear from what has preceded that the evidence provided by the Book reinforces this observation. At the same time, there is evidence of a relatively high level of agreement between the Book's scribes with respect to what functions they mark and what means they employ to mark functions but there is a moderate level of agreement between them with respect to how they map the specific functions by those specific means.

It is fair to conclude, on balance, that the separate practices of the three Townshend Family Recipe Book scribes resemble one another more than at first meets the eye. This resemblance can be considered to embody ongoing standardisation, albeit their practices are standardising to a target different from the one that eventually prevailed in that it is not one consciously based on syntax in whole or in part. It is not reasonable to consider the discourse-based target evidence of altogether absent standardisation in view of the long history of both the functions and the means, from Aristophanes on.

Modern scholars may have paid punctuation the least attention among the various levels of language. However, they have increasingly expanded the set of variables that may potentially

explain the variation present at a given level of language. A family of salient such variables are those associated with the material aspects of texts, which are clearly not entirely independent of each other. This paper has thus suggested that there may have been less need for punctuation to aid the reader in parsing Scribe B's text or discerning its hierarchical structure at the discourse level since this scribe's hand is larger, more upright and more easily legible than the more cursive hands of Scribes A and C. Relatedly, it is significant that the Townshend Family Recipe Book is a manuscript produced around one and a half centuries after Caxton's introduction, to England, of printing from movable type. It is generally accepted that the introduction of printing had a standardising effect on orthography, whereas variation persisted longer in texts composed or copied by hand (cf. Rutkowska & Rössler, 2012). Every grammarians' treatise brought up above is a printed work. Their converging inventories of marks evinces a standardising effect of printing also on punctuation, which will have become a self-reinforcing process through type for other marks not, or no longer, being cast. The absence of syntactic punctuation from the Book other than by coincidence and the presence in it of an idiosyncratic mark like Scribe A's triangularly arranged dots demonstrate that punctuation too standardised later in handwritten materials, if standardisation is understood to mean development in the direction of the target that is the present-day system.

Another set of salient variables relate to text-type. An influential account relating to the fifteenth century, prior to the introduction of printing, locates the formation of the predecessor to Gil's *Communis dialectus* in legal and other documents emanating from offices of national administration in the London-Westminster area (Samuels, 1963).<sup>9</sup> I am not aware of any study linking standardisation of punctuation to this particular body of documents, nor generally to documents as a text-type; on the contrary, there is a widely held view that legal documents strongly tend to be sparsely punctuated, be they manuscript or printed ones.<sup>10</sup> Where there is evidence of what might be considered beginning standardisation of punctuation is in manuscript copies of the same (non-documentary) work, for it has been shown that the same textual locations tend to be punctuated in copies of Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (Salter, 1956; Smith, 2017). The presence of punctuation in those locations constituted visual cues which may have supported unaided, private reading and helped to fix a particular, authoritative interpretation (Mackay, 2012; Parkes, 1997; Smith, 2013).<sup>11</sup> It is my impression that the manuscript copies of Love's *Mirror* are not unique among manuscript copies of a single work in containing punctuation in the same textual locations, albeit the norm is for the various copies to differ in respect of what marks are employed (cf. de la Cruz Cabanillas, 2016). The Townshend Family Recipe Book is not a legal document, and it is not known whether other copies of the recipes exist with which its punctuation may be compared. What can be stated is that regardless of whether the recipes were meant to be read in silence or not, all three scribes have furnished them with punctuation, in the extended sense that includes



layout. This punctuation both reflects and supports the transparently hierarchical structure of the recipes and facilitates information retrieval.

A study of the punctuation supplied by a mere three scribes who copied a single text-type into a single mid-seventeenth-century manuscript does not permit valid generalisation about what variables were truly salient in the standardisation process. Several other studies have likewise been limited through focusing on the marks, functions and mark-function mappings attested in individual texts, works or text-types, or on the recommendations for how to deploy punctuation made by Early Modern grammarians. The exception is Parkes's (1992) survey which, however, addresses Latin rather than English, covers western Europe rather than England, and is based on materials that happened to be conveniently accessible to him; it takes account of text-type principally by discussing poetry in a separate chapter from prose. Zeeman (1956), who found herself unable to generalise the results of an investigation into the punctuation present in manuscripts of Love's *Mirror*, called for the systematic compilation of a reference corpus with a narrower chronological, linguistic and geographical scope than Parkes's survey has; and with maximum variation in subject-matter and style. Such a corpus remains a desideratum and would make generalisation possible.

It is the transparently hierarchical structure of the recipe at the discourse level that has made it easy to appreciate how the Book's three scribes have consciously punctuated so as to delimit the constitutive elements of that structure. It may not be as easy readily to recognise structural elements in other text-types. The compilers of any possible reference corpus should take heed of this observation and design any possible reference corpus and the mining tools in such a way as to permit scholars to discern structural elements and make it possible to relate them to punctuation in both the narrow and extended senses. A scholar risks developing a false impression of a haphazard distribution of marks from working from, say, a concordance which gives a limited amount of lexical context to the left and right of a hit and ignores layout.

## NOTES

- 1 I worked from digital images for the purposes of this article. It was not possible to determine the collation of the manuscript from the images.
- 2 Studies of grammaticalisation point to bridging contexts as a necessary precondition for reinterpreting a lexical unit as a grammatical unit. Such a context is an ambiguous one between an old interpretation and a new one, where the pragmatics of the individual example may favour the new interpretation. The concept has been applied many times to explain change at other levels of language, not least semantics. Scribe C's use of the comma for the *kommata* has frequently led to it falling at a clausal boundary. This coincidence between a discourse-based division and a syntax-based division constitutes a bridging context.
- 3 The text of the manuscript has been transcribed in its entirety by me for inclusion in the *Málaga Corpus of Early Modern English Scientific Prose*, downloadable from <https://modernmss.uma.es>.

- The Corpus project has received funding from the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (grant FFI2014-57963-P).
- 4 Images of the Townshend Family Recipe Book are available from the Wellcome Library at <https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b19643147#>, along with a bibliographical description of the manuscript.
  - 5 The recipe for a liquid medicine (“julep”) on fol. 81v mirrors this structure, with a lower-case letter opening the third *kolon*.
  - 6 A long horizontal stroke fills up a line on fol. 67v. The stroke is most likely a mere line-filler and separator but there exist historical precedents for such lines as end-of-*periodus* marks functionally equivalent to Scribe A’s three dots arranged in a triangle; cf. what Parkes (1992, *passim*) calls the ‘7’-shaped *positura* mark. *Coronis* marks supplied in the left margin to serve this same function are known from early Greek and could be accompanied by a *paragraphos* mark following the last word. While the *coronis* mark did not survive, the *paragraphos* mark did, and it is this mark which is formally identical to Scribe C’s mark, for it was a long horizontal stroke in its simplest form. It could also consist of two near-parallel horizontal lines which met to the right, like a capital letter Y rotated 90 degrees anticlockwise. Either way, Scribe B’s horizontal stroke is a *nonce*-mark.
  - 7 Rodríguez-Álvarez (2010: 41) says “twenty-five” in the running text, but her Table 1 lists twenty-six by my count.
  - 8 de la Cruz Cabanillas (2016) compared the punctuation marks (if any) found in corresponding locations in manuscript copies of a single medieval work. She found some agreement in the repertoire of marks used by the various manuscripts’ respective scribes but divergence in what mark was used to serve what function. This characterisation holds for the Townshend Family Recipe Book too.
  - 9 The variety in question is that which Samuels (1963) named Type IV or Chancery Standard and portrayed as the most recent of four standardising varieties known from the Middle English period. The essays in Wright (2020) strongly question the evidential basis for the four types.
  - 10 The view that what we today consider punctuation marks proper are virtually absent from medieval legal documents, or at best randomly deployed, goes back at least a century; see, for example, Jenkinson (1926: 154). However, Rodríguez-Álvarez (1998) has convincingly challenged it. She has found equiparative punctuation, manifested by punctuation marks proper, in as many as 44 percent of the legal documents included in her corpus, albeit it is scant in several. She has additionally found marks that disambiguate, *punctus* surrounding numbers, marginal paraps and the like.
  - 11 Calle-Martín (2004) accepted the view that medieval punctuation seeks to assist those reading aloud to others only for texts intended for oral delivery such as poetry and sermons. He contested its validity for genres not so intended such as medical writings, and utilitarian and scientific prose.

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