Medical terminology of human reproduction in Late Medieval and Early Modern English

Alpo Honkapohja
ORCID: 0000-0002-9724-5180
Carla Suhr
ORCID: 0000-0002-5730-7180

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In this paper, we compare the use of medical terminology related to human reproduction in a selection of texts in Middle English Medical Texts (MEMT, 2005) and Early Modern English Medical Texts (EMEMT, 2010). The vernacularisation of English medical writing in the medieval and early modern periods was accompanied by a huge influx of new medical terms, many of which were synonymous, as well as changes in medical knowledge and scientific thought-styles in general. We focus on three subsets of terms used to refer to the womb, the genitalia and the afterbirth, and conduct a corpus-assisted discourse analysis of the contexts and functions of the various terms in the subsets in order to assess motives for selecting particular terms over others. Finally, we compare our findings across the two corpora to determine any long-term trends or changes that can tell us how specialised medical terminology developed over time.

1. Introduction

The vernacularisation of science, particularly of medicine, in England has long been a vibrant field of study. The beginnings of this long process were first investigated, in a historical linguistic framework, in scholarly editions of individual treatises (see, for example, Pahta 1998) and in lexicographical research on the increasing medical lexicon (see, especially, Norri 2016, which is largely based on his extensive earlier work, and McConchie 1997). The compilation of corpora specialising in medical discourse from Late Middle English to Late Modern English (Middle English Medical Texts (MEMT, 2005), Early Modern English Medical Texts (EMEMT, 2010) and Late Modern English Medical Texts (LMEMT, 2019)) made it possible to study the development of medical discourse in a long diachrony. Thus, we know that, in the late medieval period, scholastic traditions were still strong, and that medical thinking about reproduction relied heavily on classical authorities. However, as vernacular writing was not yet fully standardised, the practices of medical writing could vary considerably (see, for example, the chapters in Taavitsainen & Pahta (eds.) 2004). We also know that medieval traditions continued into the early modern period, though new discoveries in anatomy and physiology as well as social changes in disciplinary practices also influenced medical texts (see the chapters in Taavitsainen & Pahta (eds.) 2011). With the aid of historical corpora, it is now possible to investigate the development of specialised terminology in a more nuanced way, by going beyond first attestations of terms to systematic analyses of their contexts of use.

In this paper, we will focus on the terminology used in one specific discipline within medicine, human reproduction, which was also affected by the more general developments in medical writing (Pahta & Ratia 2010: 94). Using a corpus-assisted discourse analysis, we investigate diachronically the use of terminology in Middle English (ME) and Early Modern English (EModE) texts specialising on this topic. First, we examine the range of terms used in these texts and how their repertoire changes over time. Second, we suggest reasons behind the selection of particular terms over others. This kind of microstudy goes beyond charting the appearance and disappearance of new terms by examining why some terms are preferred over others and how they are used in different contexts.

2. Background

Childbirth is a topic that has been handled in medical writing since the earliest extant texts. Nearly a fifth of the corpus attributed to Hippocrates and written in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E focuses on the female body (Green 2000: 5). The majority of ME texts on the topic are very much in the tradition of scholasticism, ultimately descending from Greco-Roman medical practice, especially as synthesised by Galen of Pergamon.

Late-antique and medieval gynaecological literature, spanning from fourth to fifteenth century, was vast, comprising hundreds of texts, including specialised treatises but also integrated into broader medical literature. Information on childbirth can be found in specialised treatises on the topic as well as in general collections on medicine and surgery (cf. Green 2000). Among these, the most influential was *Gynaecia* by Muscio based on the writings of Soranus of Ephesus, which played a crucial role in disseminating ancient medical knowledge throughout the Middle Ages (Green 1992: 55). Another very influential body of work were the writings attributed to Trota of Salerno, likely written in twelfth-century Italy, which gained widespread influence due to its compatibility with the prevailing Galenic framework.

Prior to 1375, Latin and Anglo-Norman French were the predominant languages of written communication, and even after that, Latin remained the lingua franca of scientific and institutional discourse. Medicine was at the spearhead of English vernacularisation, but Latin, French and later Greek and other languages continued to coexist in medical writing through the medieval and early modern periods (Pahta 2011: 117). According to Voigts (1996; see also Norri 2004: 101), by 1475 the full range of Latin registers and genres was available in vernacular translation; by 1700, English was the dominant language of medical writing (Pahta & Taavitsainen 2004: 5). The language shift was accompanied by a shift in scientific thought-styles: the scholastic emphasis on classical medical knowledge was gradually giving way to empiricism. Medieval traditions continued into the early modern period, though new discoveries in anatomy and physiology as well as social changes in disciplinary practices also influenced medical texts on reproduction (Pahta & Ratia 2010: 94). There was also an expansion in the readership of these texts.

The question of the readership of ME gynaecological literature – whether predominantly male or female – is problematic and remains a subject of debate. As Green (1992: 56) puts it, "the evidence, both textual and codicological, suggests something like a tug-of-war between men and women for possession of these texts" (see also Green 2000; 2005; Green & Mooney 2006). Nonetheless, there was an expansion in written culture in the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which also made gynaecological books more readily available to practitioners of different levels of education as well as lay readers (Pahta & Taavitsainen 2010: 4–5).

The vernacularisation of medical writing that started in the mid-fourteenth century required new vernacular medical terms. Previously, the sixteenth century had been identified as the period of significant lexical expansion in scientific and medical terminology (see, for example, Görlach 1991), but Norri (2004: 101) argues that the foundations for the expansion were laid already in the period 1375–1500. According to him, about 11% of ME terms for body parts were in use already in Old English, and a handful of new terms appeared in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but it is in late ME that the lexicon explodes, which, of course, coincides with the period of significant increase in medical treatises written in the vernacular (Norri 2004: 109).

According to Norri (2004: 111–129), new medical words were borrowed mainly from Latin and French (or both), but a new term could also be coined by modifying non-medical words, often as metaphors; the term *mother*, for example, was extended to both the womb and the cerebral meninges as a reflection of their protective functions. *Mother* is also an example of semantic borrowing from Latin (*matrix* for 'womb' and *mater* for 'cerebral meninx'). Other ways of introducing new terms were by metonymy, for example by a part of something representing the whole, or simply by everyday words such as 'fit' being taken into a particular medical use. Affixation and compounding as well as noun phrases (for example 'bleeding of the nose') were also important ways to increase the medical lexicon. The end result is a vast number of new terms created in various ways. Comparisons of different translations of the same Latin originals reveal that translators used different techniques for dealing with Latin terms, indicating differences in the individual lexical inventories of translators (Norri 2004: 111–129). It has been suggested that Latin borrowings for technical terms often only had one meaning and were

therefore less ambiguous than native words, which tended to have multiple meanings (Nevalainen 2006: 54).

Interestingly, Norri also notes that almost half of the medical terms for body parts and illnesses found in ME became obsolete before 1550 (2004: 130). This concerned mainly terms borrowed unchanged from Latin texts, many of which were often found in a single treatise and therefore must have reflected individual translation choices. However, many native coinages were also lost (Norri 2004: 131). The reasons for the disappearance of particular terms are hard to identify, but phonetic reasons and homonymy have been suggested for some terms, as well as a tendency to reduce the number of alternatives when there are multiple complete synonyms; tautological or unclear terms also tended to disappear from the lexicon (Norri 2004: 131–137). What is evident is that the late ME period was a period of great lexical expansion, but that many of the new terms were not permanent, thus leading to continued lexical expansion in the early modern period.

Medical terminology has been found to be one of the key contexts for code-switching (Pahta 2004; 2011). According to Pahta (2004: 82), in ME especially the more learned texts often made use of the terms in the source text by borrowing or code-switching.[1] It is evident that these code-switches were not always used to fill in lexical gaps, as they were often glossed with vernacular synonyms. In ME texts, foreign terms are commonly accompanied by explanations, but this practice seems to decrease in the early modern period (Pahta 2011: 124). Pahta (2004: 83) finds that code-switched terms "contribute to the precision and specificity required of scientific discourse", but that they are also used for stylistic, prestige or didactic purposes to signal group membership and familiarity with the language of the particular discourse community. It is important to note, though, that no clear-cut trends of any kind regarding code-switching of medical terms have been observed for ME or EModE medical texts (Pahta 2004: 97; Pahta 2011: 125).

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1   The line between borrowing and code-switching is notoriously fuzzy, especially in historical texts (see Pahta 2004: 78–80). Pahta's studies (2004; 2011) on code-switching focus on switches that can be considered unambiguous on the basis of formal or contextual cues such as the retention of original inflections or explicit flags; Norri (2004) does the same when distinguishing between Latin and anglicised term. We follow the same practice for identifying code-switching.

Glossing medical terms, with and without code-switching, is one strategy for defining them. Other (sometimes overlapping) strategies for defining terms include explaining them when there were no English equivalents categorising them by listing their characteristics or symptoms; relating them to the symptoms or other body parts; and by explaining their origins (McConchie & Curzan 2011: 83–88). Of course, medical terms are often used without defining them. McConchie & Curzan (2011: 91) note that, in the early modern period, practically-oriented surgeons engage in defining less than the classically-trained physicians.

Previous research on medical terminology in ME and EModE has focused mostly on lexicographical studies that chart the repertoire of medical terms (see especially Norri 2016 and McConchie 1997), and studies on medical terms as loci of code-switching (see especially Pahta 2004; 2011). However, Sylwano-wicz (2018) has investigated the use and distribution of medical terms used with reference to medical preparations in ME and EModE recipes. She found that medical terms referring to medical preparations were rather uncommon in recipes, and that the terms used were more often general terms rather than specific ones, possibly because the focus was on the ailment to be cured rather than the preparation used to cure it. Many of the terms were adopted from Latin or French, especially in the more learned compilations (Sylwanowicz 2018). In the present diachronic study, we focus on another domain of medi-cine, childbirth. We analyse in detail the contexts of use and functions of a small selection of synonymous code-switched, borrowed and native terms to see if there are changes in the way the terms are used across time. The mate-rial and analytical method are explained in the next section.

3. Material and method

The material for this study is drawn from two corpora, *Middle English Medical Texts* (MEMT, 2005) and *Early Modern English Medical Texts* (EMEMT, 2010). The domain-specific corpora were carefully compiled to accurately represent the totality of medical writing in English between the years 1375 and 1700.[2] Texts are included in their entirety or in 10,000-word samples usually taken

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2   For the compilation criteria of the corpora, see https://varieng.helsinki.fi/CoRD/corpora/CEEM/compilation.html.

from the beginning of longer texts. It should be noted that the corpus sampling method inevitably means that we may miss some instances of the terms we investigate.

For this study, we narrowed down the selection into texts focusing on gynaecology and childbirth in the two corpora, which provides us with continuity in terms of topic and register (see Table 1). From MEMT, we selected four texts focusing on childbirth from the perspectives of gynaecology and embryology. The selection includes two longer treatises: *De spermate* and *Sykenesse of wymmen*. It also includes two shorter texts, *De spermate hominis*, a poem on embryology, as well as *Nature of Wommen*, a very concise English translation of a Latin adaptation of Muscio's influential *Gynaecia*. These texts span a range of dates in the century which saw the emergence of medical writing in English vernacular. *Nature of Wommen* dates from the 14th century (see Green 1992: 84–85). In contrast, *De spermate* survives in the voluminous Trinity College Cambridge R. 14.52, dating from 1458–1468. Tavormina (2006) describes the manuscript as "an unusually ambitious instance of vernacularisation of medical and scientific writings in late medieval England" (xii). Consequently, the ME subcorpus exhibits a continuity of almost hundred years. The total word count of the ME material is 14,740 words.

EMEMT contains a subcategory of texts dealing with midwifery and children's diseases. Of the ten texts in the subcategory, seven texts describe reproductive theory and anatomy, particular complications of reproductive organs, or practical information on the generation and birth of children. They take the form of treatises for practitioners, handbooks for midwives and even self-help books for women. The remaining three texts deal with children's diseases. Human reproduction is also discussed in some surgical texts (EMEMT category 5), but they were left out of the analysis as they did not contain significant numbers of the terms we focus on. With a word count of 102,923 words, the EModE material is much larger than the ME material.

Table 1. The MEMT and EMEMT texts selected for analysis. The three EMEMT texts focusing on children's diseases are marked with an asterisk.

MEMT text	Edition	Word count
De spermate	MS: Trinity College Cambridge R.14.52, ff. 28r–36v. Pahta, Päivi 1998. *Medieval Embryology in the Vernacular: The Case of* De spermate. Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki 53, 161–255. Helsinki: Société Néophilologique de Helsinki.	8,063
De spermate hominis	MS: National Library of Scotland Advocate's 23.7.11, ff. 89v–90r. Hargreaves, H. 1977. *De spermate hominis:* A Middle English poem on human embryology. *Mediaeval Studies* 39: 507.	345
Nature of Wommen	MS: BL Egerton 827, ff. 28v–30v. Green, Monica H. 1992. Obstetrical and gynecological texts in Middle English. *Studies in The Age of Chaucer* 14: 85–88.	1,011
Sekenesse of Wymmen 2	MS: Yale Medical Library 47, ff. 65v–71v. Transcribed from the manuscript by Francisco Alonso Almeida. By permission of Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical library.	5,321
EMEMT text	**Edition**	**Word count**
Roesslin	Roesslin, Eucharius. *The Byrth of Mankynde…* London: T[homas] R[aynald], 1540. STC 21153.	9,511
Phayer*	Phayer, Thomas. *The KEGIment of life, whervnto is added a treatyse of the Pestilence, with the booke of children newly corrected and enlarged by T. Phayer*. Facsimile edition 1969. Amsterdam/New York: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum and Da Capo Press. (Originally London: Edward Whitchurch, 1546). STC 11969.	10,260
Jorden	Jorden, Edward. *A BRIEFE DISCOVRSE OF A DISEASE CALLED THE Suffocation of the Mother…* London: Iohn Windet, 1603. STC 14790.	11,633
Guillemeau, *Child-birth*	Guillemeau, Jacques. *CHILD-BIRTH OR, THE HAPPY DELIVERIE OF VVOMEN… To which is*	10,593

	added, a Treatise of the diseases of Infants, and young Children: with the Cure of them... Facsimile edition 1972. Amsterdam/New York: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum and Da Capo Press. (Originally London: A. Hatfield, 1603). STC 12496.	
Guillemeau, *Nvrsing**	Guillemeau, Jacques. *CHILD-BIRTH OR, THE HAPPY DELIVERIE OF VVOMEN... To which is added, a Treatise of the diseases of Infants, and young Children: with the Cure of them...* Facsimile edition 1972. Amsterdam/New York: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum and Da Capo Press. (Originally London: A. Hatfield, 1603). STC 12496.	10,269
Sadler	Sadler, John. *THE SICKE VVOMANS PRIVATE LOOKING-GLASSE...* Facsimile edition 1977. Amsterdam/New York: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum and Da Capo Press. (Originally London: Printed by Anne Griffin, for Philemon Stephens, and Christopher Meridith, 1636). STC 21544.	10,680
Culpeper	Culpaper, Nicholas. *A DIRECTORY FOR MIDWIVES...* London: Printed by Peter Cole, 1651. Wing C7488.	9,355
Pemell*	Pemell, Robert. *De morbis puerorum, OR, A TREATISE OF The Diseases of Children...* London: printed by J. Legatt, for Philemon Stephens. Wing P1132.	10,129
Sharp	Sharp, Jane. *THE MIDWIVES BOOK...* London: Simon Miller, 1671. Wing S2969B.	10,025
Aristotle	*ARISTOTELES MASTER-PIECE Or The Secrets of Generation displayed in all the parts thereof...* London: Printed for J. How, 1684. Wing A3689.	10,468

We started by looking at the word lists of the corpora created by AntConc software (Anthony 2023) and identifying potential medical terms, which were then checked using KWIC (Key Word in Context) concordances. From the extensive list of concordances we selected three subsets of synonymous or near-synonymous terms that recur across multiple texts. Each subset contains both foreign-based and native terms. Though not all terms in each subset are found

in all texts, at least some of them appear in ME as well as EModE. The three subsets of terms are as follows:

1. Terms referring to the womb: *womb, matrice/matrix, moder/mother* (excluding the sense of a parent), *uterus*
2. Terms referring to genitalia: *privy member/thing/place/passage/ entrance, private parts, privities, genitalia*
3. Terms referring to afterbirth: *afterbirth, afterburden, secondine/ secundine, second birth, latter birth*

The *Middle English Dictionary* (hence MED), *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), Juhani Norri's *Dictionary of Medical Vocabulary in English, 1375–1550* (2016) and the *Historical Thesaurus of English* (HTE) were consulted for information on meanings, etymologies and first attestations and to find other potential terms for the subsets.

The KWIC concordances give us numerical data about the frequencies of each term in the two corpora. However, as the frequencies are often quite low and the sizes of the two data sets are very different, we use the quantitative data to compare frequencies of terms within each subset of terms in the two data sets. Diachronic comparisons of subsets of terms consider the relative ranking of the alternative terms as well as the appearance and disappearance of terms.

The quantitative analysis is used to support a qualitative discourse analysis, which focuses on the contexts of use and the functions of each term in the subsets. The terms were analysed by close reading of the entire passages in order to find out if we could assign a motive for selecting a particular term from the subset of alternatives. Possible motives could be related to context – for example, a theoretical versus practical passage, a definition of a term versus undefined use in running text, a translation versus original text, the anticipated readership – or function, for example as a discourse-organising heading. With this information, we can consider how vernacularisation and other contemporary developments in medical writing are reflected in the use of our three subsets of medical terms.

4. Results

We start by describing our findings on the three subsets of terms in ME, followed by EModE. The paper then discusses each term, presenting the token

count, discussing the term's relevance in medical discourse and illustrating it by examples. Comparisons across time and the larger implications of our results are discussed in the final section of this paper.

4.1 Middle English

Table 2 shows the distribution of all terms across this subcorpus. The terms are divided into three groups, the womb, genitalia and afterbirth, although the semantic field of ME words for 'womb' partly overlaps with genitalia. Table 2 shows the raw token counts of these terms.

Table 2. Token counts for subsets 'womb', 'genitalia' and 'afterbirth' in MEMT.

Terms in subset 'womb'	Instances
womb	30
matrice/matrix	31
mother/moder	69
uterus	-
Terms in subset 'genitalia'	**Instances**
privities, privy part(s)/place/ passage/entrance, private parts	1
privy member	15
Terms in subset 'afterbirth'	**Instances**
secondine	5
second birth/latter birth	-
after-birth/after-burden	-

Moder

The most frequent word used in the context of childbirth is *moder* (which is attested with the spellings *moder*, *moders*, *modur*). Norri (2004: 116–117) classifies the term as metonymic, as the protective meaning of the word was extended to the female reproductive system, but also notes that the word is a semantic borrowing from Latin, which could stand both for *matrix* 'womb' and *mater* 'cerebral meninx'. He (2016: 697) cites 1425(1389) as the earliest attestation with the meaning 'womb'. The extension of the semantic field to both womb and genitalia is also evident from the MED definition.

> 6a.
> *Anat.* and *med.* The uterus of a woman, womb; also *fig.*; the reproductive organs or genitalia of a female animal; causes (passiounes) of the ~, diseases of the uterus; risinge of the ~, suffocacioun of the ~, a disturbance or disorder of the uterus.

A total of 147 instances of *moder* (74 in *Sekenesse of Wymmen*, 72 in *De spermate*, 1 in *De spermate hominis*) are found in the MEMT subcorpus. However, this also includes the meaning 'human parent', which is the exclusive one in *De spermate*. In this treatise, it often appears in discussions about the effects of the timing of conception and the humoral complexions of both parents, which affect the child. This usage is illustrated in example 1.

> 1   the chield forsoth be conceyved in the hour of sangwyn, the fader
>   and moder in houres of blac coler, the more liefully he reteyneth the
>   figure of fader and moder and of the nature of rede coler than of the
>   nature of sanguyn, only he reteigneth the propre passioun from his
>   bigynnyng, that is to say of bloode. (*De spermate*: f. 34r)

When all the tokens with reference to 'human parent' are excluded, *moder* still remains the most frequent childbirth term in the corpus. However, this usage is concentrated into a single text. All 69 tokens that refer to the female reproductive system are found in the *Sekenesse of Wymmen*, in which this meaning is the predominant one (there are also five tokens with identical spelling, in which the reference is to 'human parent'). The fact that the usage also encompasses genitalia is made explicit by a Latin gloss, given in example 2, which specifies that the Latin term for the 'mouth of the moder' is *vulva*.

2   Ffor aposteme yn þe moder.
     The posteme yn þe moder bredeþe yn dyuerse partyes oþer whiles in
     þe mouþe of þe moder, id est in vulua, oþer whyles with yn forther.
     (*Sekenesse of Wymmen*: f. 68v)

This example is also notable for another reason, as it contains a unique example within the present corpus of the Latin formula *.i.* 'i(d est)'", the earlier variant of *i.e.*, which is common in many other medieval medical translations" (Pahta & Carillo Linares 2006: 104). It is, however, the only instance of this formula in the present subcorpus. The terms which we included in the present study are, by and large, not glossed by equivalent Latin terms. The appearance of the bilingual *.i.* formula here stands as an exception rather than the norm.

Code-switching can, however, be found in textual organisation (cf. Pahta 2004: 90–91). Notably, the Latin word *matricis* (*matrix*, gen.) is used twice in section headings (which are in Latin) in the *Sekenesse of Wymmen*. It is in both cases referred to as *of þe moder* in the running text, as shown in example 3 (see also Pahta 2004: 91). Consequently, a comparison between the two longer texts, *De spermate* and *Sekenesse of Wymmen*, reveals two different translation approaches to the same subject matter.

3   Suffocacio matricis.
     Suffocacyon of þe moder is when a womans hert her lyghtes ben
     þrust to gedur be rysyng of þe moder so þat þei lese hir breþynge &
     men calle it a cardiacle, for it ys a greuaunce of þe hert. (*Sekenesse of
     Wymmen*: f. 65v)

As a result, an intriguing asymmetry emerges. While *moder* is the most frequent term for referencing the female reproductive system in the present corpus, its usage is confined to a single text: *Sekenesse of Wymmen*. In contrast, in *De spermate*, the word is used exclusively with the meaning 'human parent', while the reproductive system is denoted as *matris*. As both of these texts were copied in the fifteenth century, after the earliest attestation of *moder* meaning 'womb' (cf. Norri 2016: 697), this discrepancy stems from different translation strategies employed within each text. The variability in the translation strategies of ME medical translators is something which has also been

noted by Norri (2004: 129) and Jones (1989). The task of creating whole new medical vocabulary in the vernacular was considerable.

The other two texts are considerably shorter. *Nature of Wommen* does not contain a single token of *moder*, whereas the fourth text, *De spermate hominis*, contains one instance of *moder* (as evidenced in example 4).

4   The womman resseiuithe þe sede of man anone Wiþin þe moder thei ben medillid togedre ful sone Þe tone is hote þe toþer is colde (*De spermate hominis*: f. 89v)

The word *moder* is used in a passage which explains how male and female seed commingle within the mother, which most likely refers to the female reproductive system. However, it could arguably also be understood as referring to the human parent.

Womb

The word 'womb' is found in all four of the texts (*De spermate*, 5 tokens; *De spermate hominis*, 1 token; *Nature or Wommen*, 3 tokens; *Sekenesse of Wymmen*, 21 tokens). This is a native Germanic word, which can be traced back to Old English *wamb*, *womb* and further to proto-Germanic **wambo*. It is the earliest word attested in the semantic fields included in the present study, as the metonymic extension/loan translation of *moder* to mean 'womb' seems to occur only in the fifteenth century. It is thus an example of what Norri (2004) means when he observes that the "Old English stratum contains a considerably larger number of terms for body parts (11 per cent) than for sicknesses" (108–109). HTE shows *womb* to be the only word in the category *female sex organs: womb* which is in continuous use from OE to the present day. Nonetheless, the semantic field of the term in ME was broader than its present-day meaning. This is evident from MED meaning 5a.

5a.
(a) The human uterus, womb; also *fig.*; specif. the womb of the Virgin Mary; also, the vaginal canal, vagina [quot. a1450 *Diseases Women(2)*]; ~ gate, the vulva; fruit (wastme) of ~, offspring; (b) the uterus of an animal or a fowl; (c) *fig.* ?a progenitor; (d) ?transl. of L Alva, apparently the name of a star in the constellation Sagittarius; (e) in asseverations.

In the MEMT subcorpus, the term *womb* – in contrast to *moder* – is often used with meanings related to the development of the fetus in the womb. In the Pseudo-Galenic *De spermate* it is used referring to the development of the fetus discussed in the astro-medical, humoral theory framework, which is central to this work (example 5).

> 5   Therfor of so moche of his agilite he hath and of humours, whan he bigynneþ in the wombe of humours to transferre the propirtes of planetis and signes and to lotte the propirtes with variable workes. (*De spermate*: f. 32r)

In other instances, the reference is to the child moving in the womb (example 6).

> 6   It is to be wist and knowen that bi 3 monethis past in þe man and iiij in the womman bigynne the veynes to issue to the constitucioun and makyng of the nailes. From than bigynneþ the chield to moeve in the wombe, and after that menstr[{ua{]t of bloode, whiche is made cotidianly of mete and drynke in the bodie of the Moder (*De spermate*: f. 29r)

The word *womb* is also used as a collocate with child in *Sekenesse of Wymmen*, specifically in discussions of stillbirths, as illustrated in example 7. This example contains several of the terms we focus on in this study, showing their typical meanings in this translator's usage. The reference to *hir priuy member* is with respect to 'administering a treatment to external genitalia'. The reference to *womb* is with reference to a (dead) child. The term *secondine* is used to refer to the afterbirth and the term *moder* to the womb as well.

> 7   Or elles temper borage with wyne & gif hir þat to drinke, or make a plastre of mugwort soden in watre from þe nauyll to hir priuy membre, ffor þat makeþe a woman sone to be delyuerd of child if it be ded in hir wombe and it draweþ oute þe secondyne. But let yt not ly to longe for yt woll drawe þe moder al oute. (*Sekenesse of Wymmen*: f. 70v)

The term *womb* is also often used to refer to sicknesses affecting the uterus, such as womb moving out of place (as in example 7). Additionally, in Old and Middle English the word could also be used to refer to the 'stomach as the primary organ of digestion'. This is found once in *De spermate* (example 8).

8   Blac coler forsoth hath his power in the reynes, wherof rennyth bi al the body, of whos superfluite bien born passions in reynes, as the stone, and sperme and therof wastith, and ache in the wombe gendrith so that sumtyme a man may nat hold his vryne, and sumtyme he may nat sende it out. (*De spermate*: f. 30v)

There are also examples in which *womb* is clearly used to refer to 'vagina' or 'the vaginal canal' (cf. the MED definition).

9   Summe wyl fare so raþer þan somme but alle þo þat far so haue ouyr meche habundauns and we owen to loke to hem and teche hem gouernauns. Þei moste haue abstinens on day and hyr wombe moste be anoyntyd with good oyntement. (*Nature of Wommen*: f. 29v)

Example 9 from *Nature of Wommen* suggests applying a good ointment to the *wombe*, revealing a usage that seems to refer to the external entry part of the female reproductive system rather than the uterus.

Matris

The word *matris* occurs as 31 tokens with the spelling variants: *matryse*, *matryce*, *matrice*. The term shares a comparable semantic field as *moder* and *womb*, since it too can be used in a whole range of meanings within the female reproductive system. It differs from the previous two words by lacking the meaning 'parent' of *moder* (see example 1) as well as the meanings related to the digestive system of *womb* (example 8). The term can thus be said to be more purely in the medical register of gynaecology.

The word belongs to the group of words which entered the language in the ME period and which have dual origin in Latin and French/Anglo-Norman. Norri (2016) separates Latin (*matrix*) and Anglo-Norman/French forms (*matrice*) of the word into separate entries. The MED, on the other hand, groups both under the headword *mātrīs*. Interestingly, according to Norri (2016), the

Latin form is attested later (c. 1450) than the French form (c. 1375), which is supported by the present data.

All spellings in the present subcorpus seem to be derived from the French form with the exception of two tokens of the genitive *matricis* (from Lat. *matrix*, gen.), which are both found in Latin headings in *Sekenesse of Wymmen* (see example 3 above), and thus constitute code-switching used in textual organisation rather than borrowing. The French-influenced forms *matrice* and *matryce* are the preferred use in *De spermate* (example 10) and *Nature of Wommen* (example 11).

10   Forsoth if the matrice be long and strait, long and sclender shal the chield be. If it be short and straite, short and sclender shal the chield be. (*De spermate*: f. 29v)

11   Damyseles owen to be maydenes tyl þei haue purgyd and þe offycys of þe matryce mad clene. And þan þei arn clene of nature for to conceyue. (*Nature of Wommen*: f. 29r).

The use of *matryce* in the *Nature of Wommen* (example 11) is, actually, listed by Norri (2016) as the earliest attestation of the lexical item in English. It is found in a work with connections to continental France. The work is an abbreviated translation of a Latin Muscio-adaptation, which, according to Green (1992), likely "comes out of the university milieu of later-thirteenth-century Paris" (84–85). The only surviving copy of the Latin original survives in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 15081. Green notes that despite its short length, the ME summarising translation "encapsulates several major themes in mediaeval theories of female physiology and the processes of birth" (ibid.). It is a competent summary of a Latin text with French provenance.

If *Nature of Wommen* is indeed the earliest to borrow the term 'matris' to English, it is interesting to speculate about possible connection to continental French in this particular instance. As Norri (2004) notes, "[b]y the time our writers started their work, French influence on English medical vocabulary had already passed its peak" (112). Yet, this usage shows a sound-change typical of French (ibid: 111), in a translation of a work with likely French origin (albeit written in Latin). Nonetheless, with the datings, it has to be kept in mind that much material has been lost and remains unedited.

The distribution of forms of 'matris' in the subcorpus, yet again, illustrates variability in translation strategies across the ME period. The two texts in which it is used are from opposite ends of the high period of vernacularisation, potentially separated by nearly a hundred years. The *Nature of Wommen* is dated to the fourteenth century by Green (1992) and to c. 1375 by Norri. The date of copying *De spermate* is as late as 1458–1468 (cf. Tavormina 2006). In contrast, *Sekenesse of Wymmen*, which originates in the first half of the fifteenth century, only uses *matrix* in Latin section headings and translates it to *moder* in the running text (see example 3 above).

Privy member, privy parties

The term 'privy member' occurs 15 times in the ME corpus (spelling variants *pryuy*, *pryuey*, *priuy*, *priuey*, *membre*, *membris*). The form 'privy parties' is attested by a single token in the *Nature of Wommen*.

The form 'privy member' is restricted to a single text, the *Sekenesse of Wymmen*. It is a lengthy redaction of the gynaecological and obstetrical sections of Gilbertus Anglicus's *Compendium medicinae*, supplemented by material from other gynaecological treatises (see Green & Mooney 2006: 455–461). This was the most widely copied ME text of its type in the fifteenth century, and "more popular in England than even the Trotula texts" (Green 1992: 56). The work introduces itself as having been "composed so 'that oo womman may help another in hir sikenes and nat discure hir privitees to … vncurteys men'" (Green & Mooney 2006: 455), yet it survives in manuscripts we know were copied and owned by men in the context of more general medical texts (ibid.).

The address to the reader and the use of euphemistic terms like 'privy member' is typical of the so-called 'Secrets of Women' tradition of gynaecological texts, which was prevalent in England and Germany in the later Middle Ages (cf. Green 2000: 11). The usage consists of translations from Latin expressions like *circa partes secretiores* 'around more hidden parts' (Green 2000: 10). Green (2000: 13) also notes that the French tradition preferred terms were *marris* 'womb', *naissance* 'vagina [lit. 'the birth']' and *flors* 'menses [lit. 'flowers']', which, while still euphemistic, were more direct than their English equivalents.

In *Sekenesse of Wymmen*, 'privy member' is used to refer to female genitalia, when administering treatments (example 12, see also example 7 above).

In this case, the treatment is administered internally, as indicated by the preposition *yn to* 'into'.

> **12** Poudre with oyle of pyliall & put yt in a smale soft lynnen cloþe and make yt of þe schappe of an ey. Ðen put yt yn to hyr pryuy membre to let þe moder þat it fall not oute a 3eyne. (*Sekenesse of Wymmen* 2: ff. 67v–68r)

Compared to the other terms used in the ME subcorpus, the semantic field of 'privy member' in the *Sekenesse of Wymmen* is well-defined. The term is exclusively used for the outer parts of female genitalia (the translator prefers *moder* for the internal parts, see examples 2 and 3). Nine out of fifteen tokens of *membre* have the feminine personal pronoun (*hir* or *hyr*) as a collocate (as in example 12). In the rest, the context makes it obvious the reference is to vulva or vagina. This usage contrasts with the considerable variety recorded elsewhere, including the EMEMT material in the present study (see below). Norri (2016) records several variants, including an expansion in meaning from vulva or anus attested ca. 1400 and penis in 1500. The single token of *preuy partees* in *Nature of Wommen* is found in an anatomical description of female genitalia, as consisting of *stonys* by the side of the *matryce* 'by the which sperm is ministered by' (example 13).

> **13** Off þe nature of wommen is for to speke. Fyrst we sal be gynne of þe preuy partees of hem þat is her stones be þe wheche spermat is mynystered by. Ðe stonys sothly of wommen ben put on both partees of þe matryce and þo be mor round and smaler þan menys stones ben. (*Nature of Wommen* 2: f. 28v)

Jucker and Seiler (2023) have recently discussed the problematic word *queynte* appearing in Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*, arguing it to be a spelling variant of 'cunt' (58). Furthermore, based on the appearance of the word *cunt* in a range of genres, including glossaries and Lanfrank's *Complete art of Surgery*, they argue that "ME *cunte* is used regularly in medical or scientific texts" (47). It has to be noted, however, that their analysis, which is based on surgical texts, contrasts with the absence of the word in the four ME gynaecological texts included in the present corpus. This suggests register variation within

medical writing with surgical treatises opting for a different strategy, while the gynaecological treatises included in the present data are influenced by the 'Secrets of Women' tradition, in which the word is likely to have had some offensive connotations.

Secondine

The final anatomical word included in this selection is *secundine*. Norri (2016) defines it as "[f]etal membranes, placenta and umbilical cord; extruded from uterus after childbirth", and separates the French and Latin forms of the word (*secundine, secondine*). Similarly to *matris* (see above), the French form is older (c. 1375) than the Latin one (c. 1425). What is more, similarly to *matris*, the earliest attestation recorded by Norri is in the *Nature of Wommen* (example 14). HTE identifies *hala* and *cildhama* as earlier synonyms in the category 'placenta', but neither of them is used after Old English. Meanwhile, the term *afterbirth*, which is found in the EMEMT, was not attested before 1527. The OED lists *afterburden* as a possible ME alternative, but it is not attested in the MEMT material included in the present study either.

> **14** It falleth for a mydwyf to opyne þe mowth of þe matryse with hertys mary or with some oþir thyng þat is good þer fore þat it may lyghtly opene withoute querkenyng of þe schyld. Whan þe schyld is out it is for to gete out clene þe secundine. Þe secundine is a skyn þat is of þe veynes and of þe sennes of purpyl colour lyk to þe nauel of a schyld when it is born. (*Nature of Wommen*: f. 30r)

The word *secundine* occurs only 5 times in the present subcorpus. It is found in the two texts quoted here. Four of the tokens are of French-influenced spellings (*secundine* 3, *secundyne* 1); one of a Latin variant (*secundina*). However, the Latin token is an instance of text-organising code-switching, since it occurs in a Latin heading (example 15).

This term differs from other ME words included in the present study by its clear explicit definition in both texts which use it. The term is not introduced by glosses. However, the Latin heading (example 15) makes the connection between Latin *secundina* and English *secondine* explicit. What is more, both the *Nature of Wommen* (example 14) and *Sekenesse of Wymmen* contain

clear anatomical descriptions on how to identify it (example 15). The former also contains a reference to *a mydwyf*, who performs the delivery.

15   Secundina matricis. The secondyne ys a litull skynne þat is a boute þe childe in his moder wombe right as a þynn skynne, a cornell of a notte. And oþer whyles a woman ys delyuerd þer of when þat sche beryþe childe and oþer whiles yt a bydiþe still yn hir for febulnes of þe moder þat comeþe of mych fastynge, or of gret angur, or wrath, or of smytynge, or of longe flux of þe wombe, whech þinges often slethe a childe in þe moder wombe & þen þe moder delyuered hir of þe childe but þe secundyne a bydeþ styll. (*Sekenesse of Wymmen*: f. 71r)

4.2 Early Modern English

The selection of material for EModE is much larger than for ME, so the absolute numbers of instances in the two data sets are not comparable. What is evident from the quantitative analysis of terms in EMEMT (see Table 3) is that the repertoire of terms in each subset is larger than in MEMT. The qualitative analysis reveals that the distribution of terms within the data set is still uneven, with some texts dominating over others. There is also variation between authors in the selection and use of terms.

Womb, matrice/matrix, mother, uterus

Matrice/matrix, *mother* and *womb* are found in almost all of the texts, though in differing ratios. In the ten texts of the data set, the native Germanic *womb* is by far the most frequent choice in all but three texts. Eucharius Roesslin's *Byrth of Mankynde* (1540) and Jacques Guillemeau's *Child-birth* (1612) do not favour *womb* over *matrice/matrix* or *mother*. Roesslin uses *matrice* 21 times and *womb* 8 times (half of which are part of the construction 'mother's womb'), whereas Guillemeau uses the two terms more evenly, with 11 and 12 instances respectively. Both of these texts are translations, which probably contributes to the relatively higher frequency of *matrice/matrix* in comparison to other texts considered here. The third exception is Edward Jorden's *Suffocation of the Mother* (1603), a treatise that focuses on the condition in its title, so it is not surprising that the 'mother' mentioned in the condition's name is the most frequently (38 times) occurring term in his text. (Note that *moder*

Table 3. Token counts for subsets 'womb', 'genitalia' and 'afterbirth' in EMEMT.

Terms in subset 'womb'	Instances
womb	233
matrice/matrix	50
mother (excluding sense of parent)	54
uterus	6
Terms in subset 'genitalia'	**Instances**
privities	10
privy part(s)/place/passage/ entrance, private parts	20
genitals	9
Terms in subset 'afterbirth'	**Instances**
secondine/secundine	31
second birth/latter birth	9
after-birth/after-burden	5

rather than *matrice* is also used in the ME name for this condition, see example 3 above.) However, Jorden uses the Latinate term *matrix* 11 times and *womb* only 6 times, perhaps because the text is a learned treatise aimed at physicians rather than lay practitioners and therefore favours a more elevated style with Latin quotes and references as well as Latinate vocabulary.

There seem to be no distinct contexts for using *matrice/matrix* and *womb* in the EModE material. The two alternative terms are used quite interchangeably to discuss both theory and more practical issues such as the location and parts of the womb or various medical conditions pertaining to it. Though the two terms seem to be full synonyms, neither of them is in danger of disappearing, as often happened with new terms coined in late ME with full synonyms (see Norri 2004: 133–134). At the same time, the terms seem to have

become restricted to the present-day meaning of 'womb', as there are no instances where the terms refer to the stomach or the vagina (cf. ME examples 8 and 9). In the following example 16 from John Sadler's *Sicke VVomans Private Looking-glasse* (1636), both *womb* and *matrice/matrix* are used when advising on the procedure to cure a condition called "the descending or falling downe of the mother" (78).

16   When the inflation is dissipated; let the midwife annoint her hand
      with oyle of Mastick and reduce the wombe into its place. The
      matrice being put up, the situation of the patient must bee changed.
      (Sadler 1636: 82–83)

Sadler uses the term *matrice/matrix* alongside *womb* and *mother* more often than many of the other texts, but the example shows that he uses the three terms in similar contexts as full synonyms, and that he considers *matrice* an English word rather than an instance of code-switching. *Matrice/matrix* occurs as a Latin word in only three instances: in a Latin quote, in the Latin name of a medicine, and in a term specified as Latin.

Mother has the same meaning as *matrice/matrix* and *womb* (in addition to its meaning as "parent"), and it is occasionally used as an alternate for the other terms, but in the EModE texts it seems to have become more restricted in its context of use, thus avoiding extinction because of synonymity with the other two terms. This can be seen in the most common collocates of the term: "suffocation of the mother", "fits of the mother" and "falling down of the mother". The prevalence of these constructions is due in large part to Jorden's text, which focuses on the suffocation of the mother and the fits that manifest the condition, and accounts for the majority of the tokens, but even in the other texts *mother* is rarely found outside these three constructions.

There are two particular discourse strategies found in historical medical discourse that encourage the co-occurrence of synonymous terms. The first one has to do with the structuring of texts in the classical order, according to which the exposition of an illness or body part begins by defining its name, often by glossing or providing a general explanation of the phenomenon. The definition is followed by descriptions of the causes, symptoms and cures for illnesses or the structure and functions of body parts.

Providing Latin, Greek or English equivalent terms for *womb* or particular illnesses related to the womb as a part of defining the term is not common in the material of this study, which aligns with the general findings of Pahta (2011). Only one author, Nicholas Culpeper, uses this kind of code-switching strategy systematically to start off the exposition on the anatomy and function of each male and female reproductive organ, including the womb. This is seen in example 17:

17   GAlen and Hippocrates, and most of the Greeks call the Womb μήτραν, and υστεραν, and some γαστέρα; and therefore the usual word the Septuagint gives for [great with child] is έν γαστρί εχειν, the Latins call it, Matrix, and Uterus; and we English, some follow the Latin word Matrix, but the only English word is, the Womb. (Culpeper 1651: 31)

Culpeper's decision to include all foreign terms for the English *womb* may have been motivated not only by the traditional discourse structure he followed, but also by his critical attitude towards the use of foreign terms by medical practitioners and a wish to reveal the secrets of literate terminology to his unlearned target audience. In his *Directory for Midwives* (1651: 6–7), he links the use of foreign terms with aims to increase one's status and to hide knowledge from commoners: "(we must borrow terms of other Nations that we may make the common people beleeve wonders, that so our selves may grow rich and proud, and keep folk in ignorance, though to their own undoing, and the loss of many a dear life)".

Only a few other authors engage in glossing as part of defining a medical term. Edward Jorden glosses the Latin terms for the condition known as suffocation of the mother at the beginning of his treatise-length description of the ailment (1603). His glosses also include *mother* as the name for the disorder: "the Mother, or the Suffocation of the Mother" (f. 5v). John Sadler describes the condition, too, in his manual for women (1636), but he omits the foreign terms from his definition, though he specifies that 'suffocation of the mother' is an English term and then provides an explanation of the term's origin (example 18). However, his description of the womb starts by indicating Greek terms (only) for the word and an explanation of the origin of the terms (example 19):

18   THis affect which simply considered is none, but the cause of an
      affect, is called in English the Suffocation of the Mother, not because
      the wombe is strangled, but for that it causeth the woman to bee
      choked. (Sadler 1636: 61)

19   First, touching the womb; of the Grecians it is called μύτρα the
      mother; or δυλφύς, saith Priscian, because it makes us all brothers.
      (Sadler 1636: p. 4)

The glosses of Culpeper, Jorden and Sadler ascribe the terms they define
to a particular source language, perhaps as an appeal to authority. Jane
Sharp's manual for midwives, *Midwives Book* (1671), also starts the descrip-
tion of the womb by providing the Latinate term together with the native
word (example 20):

20   THe Matrix or Womb hath two parts, the great hollow part within,
      and the neck that leads to it, and it is a member made by Nature for
      propagation of children. (Sharp 1671: 34)

Contrary to the male authors, Sharp does not refer to *matrix* as a foreign
term, and it is clear from her use of the term elsewhere in the text that the
word is considered simply an English synonym for *womb*. Sharp's text is actu-
ally quite conspicuous in its absence of foreign terms, which are replaced by
very concrete descriptions explained in layman's terms; she calls the womb,
for instance, a "house for the infant to lie in" (35).
     Another discourse strategy that promotes the co-occurrence of synony-
mous terms is the practice of using doublets as a signal of a more elaborate
writing style. Like glossing, this practice is also connected to the more learned
and traditional register of medical writing. In our sample of ten texts, only one
text uses doublets consistently, and it is no surprise that it is the oldest of the
texts. The translation of Eucharius Roesslin's *Byrth of Mankynde* is from 1540,
but the original German was published in 1513. Roesslin regularly uses word
pairs, usually consisting of a Latinate term and an English synonym, as seen in
example 21, where *matrice* co-occurs with *womb*.

21   And sometyme the vesyke or bladder/ or other intralles beyng about
      the matrice or wombe be also apostumat & blystered/ whiche beynge

> greaued/ the matrice or wombe lykewyse is greaued with them/ and
> that hyndereth greatly the deliueraunce. Also sometyme in the
> fundament are emerrodes or pyles and other pusshes/ chappynges or
> chynnes which cause great payne/ also hardnes and difficulte or
> byndynge of the belly/ which thinges for the grefe and payne that
> ensueth of them causeth the woman to haue lyttell power to help
> herselfe in her labor. (Roesslin 1540: fol. 14v)

Roesslin also uses the doublet 'matrice or mother' elsewhere in his text.
What is notable in the above example is that not all doublets consist of medi-
cal terms: alongside 'vesyke or bladder' and 'matrice or womb' we see the
more general doublets 'hardnes and difficulte' and 'grefe and payne'. Thus it
seems that in Roesslin's case, doublets seem to be a stylistic choice rather than
a gloss.

The final term in this subset is *uterus*, which, according to the OED, is first
attested as an English word only in 1615. All 6 instances of this term appear in
just two of our texts, and they are always flagged as Latin rather than English:
5 tokens appear in multi-word Latin terms or quotes, and the only single-word
token is explicitly mentioned to be Latin (see example 17). It is therefore clear
that *uterus* is not yet a part of the lexicons of the writers in our data sets. How-
ever, the other terms in this subset, *womb, matrice/matrix* and *mother*, are
used synonymously, and the Latin-based *matrice/matrix* is considered a part of
the English lexicon.

Privities, privy parts/passage/place/entrance, private parts, genitals

The ME *Sekenesse of Wymmen* refers to (female) genitalia with the term *privy
member*, but in the EModE material there are no instances of this particular
term. Instead, genitals are referred to with the terms *privities* (10 instances)
and various constructions with the modifier *privy*: *privy parts* (11 instances),
privy passage (6 instances), *privy place, privy entrance* and *private parts* (1
instance each). According to the OED, *privities* and *privy place* were in use
already in ME, but *privy parts* and *private parts* only enter the English lexicon
in 1533 and 1623, respectively. *Privy passage* and *privy entrance* are not found
in the dictionary at all. *Genitals* (9 instances), the term borrowed from Anglo-
Norman or French and ultimately deriving from classical Latin, was in use in
English by the end of the fourteenth century.

All of the constructions formed from *private* or *privy* build on the idea of privacy. As such, they continue the 'secrets of women' tradition that stems from Late Medieval Latin treatises in England and Germany (see above and Green 2000: 11). Though the ME *privities* and EModE arrival *privy parts* appear most frequently in the texts analysed here (10 and 11 times, respectively), and both of them in four different texts, the number of variant forms suggests that the exact term is fluid as long as it includes the aspect of privacy. Even potentially idiosyncratic constructions like *privy entrance* and *privy passage* – the two terms not found in the MED or OED – are clear enough synonyms for *privy parts* or *privities* on the basis of context, even though *entrance* and *passage* are rather more specific in meaning than *parts*. The *privy* + noun construction is evidently quite productive, though not all constructions become established in the lexicon; Norri has noted this phenomenon already for ME (2004: 126–127). Honkapohja (2022: 81–82), on the other hand, notes that many EModE manuscript copies of John of Burgundy's medieval plague tract changed a reference to 'privy thing' either to 'privates' or 'privy members', suggesting that there may have been minute variations in this construction, which, with time, could become more or less acceptable in the register of medical writing.

As the rather low number of instances (39) shows, references to genitalia with these terms are not very common in the EModE material. Almost all of the references are found in just four texts: 13 instances in Roesslin's *Byrth of Mankynde* (1540), 7 instances in Sadler's *Sicke VVomans Private Looking-glasse* (1636), 8 instances in Culpeper's *Directory for Midwives* (1651), and 7 instances in Sharp's *Midwives Book* (1671).

The references to genitalia are mostly found in two contexts: to introduce anatomical descriptions of the reproductive organs, often as headings, as in example 22, or in discussions of treatments (example 23) or symptoms of ailments:

22   CHAP. 1. Of the Privy passage.
     IN this I shal consider but these Seven following Parts. (Culpeper 1651: 27)

23   And when ye are thus bathed or washed/ then shall it be very conuenient for you to annoynte with the foresayde greses and oyles youre backe/ belly/ nauell/ sydes/ and such places as are nere to the

> preuye partes. Farthermore it shall be greatelye profitable for her to
> conueye inwarde in to the preuye parte these foresayde oyles or
> greses with a sponge or other thynge made for the purpose/ (Roesslin
> 1540: f. 19v)

The examples show clearly that *privy passage* and *preuye parte(s)* refer to
a group of organs connected to reproduction, including both external and
internal genitalia. According to Culpeper, the privy passage consists of seven
parts (the lips, the nymphae or wings, the clitoris, the urinary tract, the carun-
cula myrtiformis, the hymen, and the neck of the womb), which he then pro-
ceeds to describe in detail. Culpeper thus effectively defines the term by re-
lating it to other body parts, both the ones that are included under the term
and the ones excluded from it, such as the womb. Culpeper's example is fol-
lowed by Sharp, whose text is based on Culpeper. Roesslin's instructions about
the use of oils to ease childbirth refers to both external and internal use of oils
'nere to the preuye partes' and 'inwarde in to the preuye parte', which also im-
plies that the term is used collectively, though rather less exactly than in the
first context. The rather vague use of *private/privy* terms found in Roesslin and
also in Sadler when discussing treatments for ailments or symptoms of ail-
ments suggests that they wished to retain an aspect of modesty or secrecy to
female genitalia.

With one exception, the *privy/private* terms are never glossed. The one
exception is the term *privy entrance*, only used once by Jane Sharp, which she
glosses as 'or the neck of the womb', indicating a more restricted meaning
than *privy part* for the term. The Latinate term *genitals*, which could have
been a potential gloss for these terms, turns out not to be an exact match,
which is probably why neither Culpeper nor Sharp uses it.

The Latinate term *genitals* (9 instances in total) is used in three texts, and
it is never glossed. Culpeper uses the term exclusively as an umbrella term to
cover all reproductive organs, male or female; for him, *genitals* seems to be a
broader term than *privy parts*. In this broader sense, *genitals* is found in a
text-organising flow-chart and the headings that introduce the sections where
male and female reproductive organs are described in order. This practice
bears a resemblance to the text-organising function of code-switched headings

in ME medical texts (Pahta 2004: 90–92); the practice decreases before disappearing in the early modern period (Pahta 2011: 129). In Sadler, *genitals* is used twice in a very general sense for external genitalia, as in example 24:

> 24   The cause of this affect is suppression of the months, repletion of the whole body, immoderate use of Venus, often handling of the genitalls, difficult childe-birth, vehement agitation of the body, falls, blowes; to which also may bee added the use of sharp pessaries, whereby not seldome the wombe is inflamed. (Sadler 1636: 86–87)

Genitals – and on one occasion an adjectival construction *genital parts* – is also found in a similar broad sense in *Aristotle's Master-piece* (1684) to refer to both male and female reproductive organs as a whole. In this general sense, *genitals* could be understood to be a synonym for *private/privy* terms, but with a sense of clinical detachment rather than secrecy or modesty. Nonetheless, it is clear that in this subset of terms, the terms formed with the anglicised French *privy* and various nouns prevail over pure Latin or French borrowings.

Secundine, afterbirth

As is the case with *womb* and *privy parts*, the EModE texts make use of a range of synonyms for *afterbirth*. However, in the case of *afterbirth*, the Latin/French borrowing *secundine* is used more often (31 instances in three texts) than the various terms formed using the English words *birth* and *burden.* One possible reason for this is that the English terms are actually the newer terms: *afterbirth*, first used in 1527 probably as a variant of the fifteenth-century term *afterburden*, is used only a total of 5 times in two texts. *Second birth* is not recognised in MED or OED – though MED does record an example of *second burden* – but Norri (1998: 394) has identified a single instance of *second birth* in an early fifteenth-century surgical text. However, 8 instances of the term are found in Roesslin's 1540 text; he also has a single instance of the term *latter birth*, which is also not recognised by MED or OED. This is the only one of the three subsets of terms where a term borrowed from Latin or French dominates over native or partially native-formed terms.

The novelty of the English-based terms is perhaps evident in the fact that all instances of *afterbirth* and *afterburden* appear only as glosses of foreign

terms or the anglicised term *secundine*. Roesslin glosses *secundine* with the native terms, whereas Culpeper glosses Greek and Latin terms with their three English terms (example 25):

25   THe Greeks call this τά δεύτερα, and τά ύστερα; the Latins imitating them, call them Secundas, and Secundinas, and our Women, the Secundine, After-birth, and after-burden. (Culpeper 1651: 51)

Culpeper's glosses are followed by detailed descriptions and functions of the four parts of the *secundine* (the placenta and three different membranes, each of which only have a name borrowed from Latin). In one of these descriptions, *secundine* is glossed again with *afterbirth*. *Secundine* is used a further four times without glossing. Sadler, who glosses the term *womb* with its Greek equivalents, uses *secundine* twice without glossing or defining the term in any way.

Roesslin's use of terminology for *afterbirth* is very interesting, as he exhibits a lot of variation in his terms. He uses the term *secundine* 21 times, and in 7 instances he combines it with one or two other terms. His proclivity for couplets as a stylistic choice was noted with the term *womb*, and this may be an explanation for *secundine* as well. In example 26, the couplet/gloss is accompanied by a definition (note also the doublet "wrapped and conteyned"):

26   Farthermore when the secondine or seconde byrthe (in the which the byrth is wrapped and conteyned) doth ones appeare/ then maye ye knowe that the labor is at hande/ (Roesslin 1540: f. 21v)

Second birth is a term that seems to have been coined by Roesslin (or his translator), as it is not found in any other text and it is not found in MED or OED. The term is also used alone in the text, without any glossing. The single instance of *latter birth* is also unique to Roesslin; it is combined with *secundine*. Both instances of *after byrthe* are combined with *secondyne* and another term (*second birth* and *caul*) in a single passage (example 27):

27   Farther ye muste vnderstande that there be thre coueres or caules in the whiche the byrthe is contayned and lapped: of the whiche the one compassyth & embrasyth rownd aboute the byrthe/ and the

> other two caules also: and it is called the secondyne seconde byrth or
> the after byrthe: the whiche defendeth the byrthe frome noysum and
> yll humours encreasynge in the matryce after conception by
> retensyon of the flowres otherwyse wonte to passe and yssue furthe
> ones in the monethe/ the whiche yll humours yf they sholde touche
> or come nere to the byrth wolde greatlye peryshe and hurte the
> same. But after the deliueraunce of the pryncipall byrth these
> humours also with the foresayd caule or secondyne yssue furthe/ and
> is called the after byrthe. (Roesslin 1540: f. 12v)

In Roesslin's definition above, *secundine* seems to consist of just the first or outermost of the three membranes that surround the foetus in the womb – elsewhere he glosses *secundine* specifically as the *first caul* – whereas Culpeper includes the placenta and the two inner membranes as part of *secundine.* Culpeper's description of the four parts of the *secundine* indicates that medical authorities were not in agreement of the exact makeup of afterbirth, which is perhaps why Roesslin completely omits a description of the placenta from his text. In any case, it seems that medical terminology referring to the afterbirth seems to be still in flux in the early modern period.

5. Discussion & conclusion

Our study of ME and EModE medical terms related to the womb, genitalia and afterbirth has shown that the English lexicon of the time was very productive and had a high tolerance for synonyms derived from both native and foreign terms. Many new medical terms may have multiple meanings, which some-times overlap, exhibiting origins by different word-formation strategies. Writers of vernacular texts made full use of the range of alternative terms, but especially in the earlier period, individual preferences can be seen in the choices of terms.

In ME, many of the terms in the three subsets cover a broader semantic field, and consequently they can refer to the uterus as well as to parts of or the entire internal and external genitalia or reproductive organs. In some cases, a term could refer to other parts of the body, too: *womb* could even refer to the navel, abdomen, bowels or stomach, cerebral ventricles or ventricles of the heart (Norri 2016: cf. *womb*). Not all of the terms in the subsets were in use in

ME, but nonetheless there are a number of potential alternatives in each subset. In the texts of this study, the selection and usage of terms in each subset appears to depend on translation strategies and to be specific to each text. Especially in the subset of terms referring to the womb, native terms seem to be preferred over the Latin/French borrowed term. This variability is particularly noticeable in the two longer texts.

By the early modern period, the ME terms have become more restricted to genitalia and/or reproductive organs, but they still exhibit some variation in their exact meanings, as exemplified by the differing understandings of the term *secundine*. *Mother* seems to have become the most restricted of the terms referring to *womb*, as it is usually found in very specific constructions that refer to particular ailments. But it is clear that many synonymous ME terms survive into the early modern period, contrary to what one could assume on the basis of general terminological developments (see Norri 2004).

New terms also appear, with especially the *privy* + noun construction showing continued productivity in the vein of the medieval "secrets of women" tradition, but some of them seem to be idiosyncratic coinages that are not adopted more largely into the lexicon. The newly borrowed Latinate term *genitalia* seems to be used in slightly different contexts to avoid overlapping with the *privy/private* terms. It is only in the subset of terms referring to afterbirth where the Latin borrowing is clearly preferred over native or anglicised terms, which is contrary to the trend noted by Sylwanowicz (2018) for terms referring to medicinal preparations in recipes. All in all, this study has shown that the medical terminology pertaining to our three subsets are still in flux both in terms of selections of terms as well as their meanings, and that with the exception of terms for afterbirth, borrowing terms from Latin was not the only or even preferred solution. Though much of this variation can be explained by the process of coining and establishing new medical terms necessary for vernacular writing, it may also reflect incomplete knowledge of human reproductive anatomy and reproductive processes.

When it comes to definitions of terminology, the ME texts mostly do not explicitly discuss and define the anatomical terms included in this study, contrary to Pahta's findings (2004: 83). The Latin gloss *vulua* for 'mouth of the mother' is a rare exception of a gloss (see example 2) and the only occurrence of the bilingual .i. glossing formula in the present corpus. Glossing (foreign or English) womb-terms in the EModE material is also not common, which

matches with the observations by Pahta (2011: 124). Also McConchie & Curzan (2011: 77) note that glossing as a way of defining terms started to shift towards the modern 'lexical definition' in the early modern period. Definitions and/or explanations are found in only a few texts that continued the classical tradition for structuring treatises.

Our data set consisting of selected texts from the MEMT and EMEMT corpora has been quite limited in this study, and especially in the case of the EModE material it was evident that the corpus text samples were not always optimal for our purposes. Thus, extending the data set to full texts – and to texts outside EMEMT and available in the *Early English Books Online* database – would give us a more comprehensive view of the range of alternate terms and their different contexts of use. In the case of ME, extending the data set in any meaningful way is not possible due to the limited amount of material in existence.

In our study of ME and EModE gynaecological texts we have focused on three subsets of terms referring to the womb, to genitalia and to the afterbirth. Our aim was to identify particular contexts and functions that could explain the selection of individual terms from the subsets and to find out if there are any long-term diachronic trends. While we can see some long-term continuities and changes in the selection of terms, we could not identify any particular trends for the motives for these selections. Individual translators and authors made their choices on the basis of their individual preferences, which likely had to do with not only their personal lexicons but also with their expectations of their audiences, genre conventions and positioning amongst contemporary medical practitioners.

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