

**Example 1- rhetorical analysis of a recipe in
Elizabeth Dyke's manuscript**

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Manuscript PDF page 49, left side. Transcript:

Jan A medison for To make one sleepe

Take 4 sponfulls of good vinegar 2 sponfulls of rose water and so much plantan water 2 sponfulls of roses put as much quantity of crums of bread the pouder of one handfull of roses leues dried as you think will make the lickor thick to lay upon a linen cloth and so lay it in lenght over the forehead and tempells from the one ere to the other let the pacient lye upon his bedd making noe noise and with in one quarter of and houre he will ^{fall a} sleep

Analysis:

In this passage from the early modern manuscript *Booke of recaits*, the writer, who is presumed to be Elizabeth Dyke, presents a recipe for a remedy to make a “pacient” (patient) sleep (Dyke 49). This medicinal recipe, which appears to be dated “Jan,” is rhetorically structured in a chronological ordering of steps: first, the adding together of various ingredients; then the placement of those ingredients onto a linen cloth; next, the laying of said mixture-covered cloth onto the patient’s head and the creation of a silent environment; and, finally, an assurance that all of these steps will cause the patient to fall asleep “with in one quarter of and houre” (Dyke 49). The use of clear directives and authoritative tone in the promise of a solution, as well as the reference to the subject who is unable to sleep as a “pacient” all contribute to an image of the writer as a knowledgeable, reliable, and experienced practitioner of the recipe. At the same time, the recipe also carries several high expectations of the reader, assuming that they will have certain knowledge, skills, and access to certain ingredients to enact the recipe.

The recipe begins with the assemblage of the mixture that will be later placed on a cloth on the patient’s head. The writer immediately makes some assumptions about the knowledge of the reader in relation to these ingredients—for instance, the first ingredient is “good vinegar,” but no criteria are provided to indicate what constitutes “good” vinegar (Dyke 49). In addition, the

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writer also holds the expectation that the reader will have access to all of the various ingredients (“rose water,” “plantan water,” etc.). The units of measure for the ingredients vary in exactness. While some of the liquid ingredients require set numbers of “sponfulls,” others are more vague. This is particularly evident in the final ingredient, which is “the pouders of one handfull of roses leves dried as you think will make the lickor thick to lay upon a linen cloth” (Dyke 49). A handfull of dried rose leaves is itself far from exact, but here the writer also expects the reader to exercise their own judgement in how thick they think the mixture ought to be to be successfully spread onto a linen cloth.

After placing the assembled mixture on said cloth, the writer turns attention to the patient, giving directives for the placement of the cloth across their forehead and temples, expanding from one “ere” (ear) to the other. The writer next gives instructions for the material conditions under which the sleeping must take place. The reader is told to have the patient “lye upon his bed,” which could be seen as a digression from the previous step of placing the cloth on his head, though the writer gives no indication (no strikethroughs, etc.) that a mistake was made in this ordering of steps. The next phrase, “making noe noise” is simultaneously clear and unclear—while it is quite clear that no noise is to be made while the patient is lying down, it is unclear who is to be “making” no noise, the practitioner of the recipe or the patient. The recipe then concludes by assuring the reader that the patient will fall asleep within “one quarter of an houre” (Dyke 49). Within this last line, the writer makes their one and only revision to the text, an addition of “fall a” to what had been previously written (“he will sleep”).

This recipe's relationship to others I have read is fairly standard. In it, there is an implied problem to which the recipe (and the writer) offers a solution. Some of these recipes, like this one, is medicinal in nature. While in this recipe someone is unable to sleep, which may indicate

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an emotional or psychological ailment, in others, someone has suffered a physical injury (see, for example, page 47, in which a cart has run over someone). Some of the recipes within my selection of the transcription are not medicinal, but rather recipes for the preparation of food. In all cases, the recipes I have encountered relate to care of the human body.

Critical research question: Within this selected recipe, the writer simultaneously exercises their *ethos*, presenting themselves as an experienced practitioner of the recipe. At the same time, the implied audience also seems to have a ready ability to put the recipe into practice without barriers of access or knowledge of ingredients. Does this likewise hold true for the recipe book as a whole? Our primary goal thus far in the course has been to learn about (and recover) the work of the writer, but what can the recipe book also tell us about the reader which the writer imagines and constructs?