

type of information. This connection transformed the two manuscripts into a sort of multilevel and multidisciplinary encyclopaedia, where the organization of data makes the search for information easier. Although it could have been a chance that the two manuscripts were combined, later readers could profit from it; moreover, later additions did not modify their structure.

If we try to distinguish between different ways of organizing and transmitting medical knowledge related to herbs and animals, we immediately notice that, with the exception of the *Historia plantarum*, the data concerning the animal world are not connected with the use of a written source, or, at least, the compiler does not consider it necessary to mention his reference texts. Probably, the *materia medica ex animalibus* was considered as a form of *practical* medical knowledge, where the concrete data play a more important role compared with the text traditions handing them over. On the other hand, it can be suggested that animal substances were perhaps more used by practitioners than by learned physicians; this hypothesis, however, is still to be proved through a closer examination of the medieval medical literature. Maybe the textual tradition related to the *materia medica ex animalibus* was not as established through a *corpus* of canonical writings particularly devoted to this topic as the one transmitting the herbalist pharmacology. This 'confused status' perhaps made the transmission of data connected with animals through a single work more difficult, but on the other side allowed some compilers to find different forms of inclusion and treatment of this topic according to their own aims and to the needs of their public.

The different forms and strategies of including animals into 'herbalist' pharmacological collections have shown that some kinds of *Enzyklopädisierung* of the *materia medica* has also taken place within the literary genre of the late medieval illustrated herbals. The different encyclopaedic forms point to different kinds of public. A specialized 'professional' reader does not need the same type of text as a well-educated bibliophile searching for information and delight. Both kinds of readers, however, do face the same scientific background, need adaptations of the same scientific sources (e.g. the *Circa instans*), whose structure, content and purposes are changed in order to be used in different contexts. In this sense, a new form of 'encyclopaedic medical knowledge' has been created, a form we have tried to sketch by isolating a specific aspect, and by following the numerous birds, fishes and quadrupeds running through the pages of the illustrated herbals and looking at us from the *Wunderkammern* of the late medieval scientific manuscripts.